

EXPLORING MARRIAGE:
A RELATIONAL WORKSHOP

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Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology
at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Ministry

by
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This professional project, completed by

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was two-fold: (1) To draw forth from a study of selected parables of Jesus a definition of human relationship which would be acceptable as representative of such understanding in the New Testament; and (2) To use that definition as the basis of a marriage training experience for engaged and/or newly wed couples. The rationale for the project is the importance of the Church's role in assisting pre-marrieds and newly weds in personal growth as they begin this important human relationship. The thesis of the paper is that this ministry can be carried out most effectively in a workshop setting.

Included in the paper are chapters which examine the state of marriage today and the Church's response to it, as well as introducing the workshop concept; human relationship as seen in selected parables of Jesus and its implications for marriage; a design for such a workshop as the paper proposes; and reporting on a testing of the design or model and conclusions.

The methodology used to research the state of marriage and the biblical foundations for the workshop design was reading and class work. The methodology used to research the workshop model included reading, class work, experience as a member of small growth groups, and experience as a leader or facilitator of small growth groups. I have participated as group member and as group leader both as a part of class work and as a local church pastor.

The workshop which was designed was "tested" by actually conducting it in a weekend retreat setting with engaged and newly wed

couples. Their evaluation of the experience and my own were used to refine the workshop, along with one addition suggested by my academic advisors.

This paper is the only one of which I know that attempts to integrate biblical studies with marriage training for engaged and newly wed couples. This paper has been done in an attempt to relate an important psychological-humanistic aspect of the Church's ministry to its biblical heritage.

A basic conclusion of this paper is that the bringing together of psychological and biblical understandings of human relationship is a good union. Holding before persons a biblical understanding of human relationship provides a challenge which is both realistic and attainable, and providing them with humanistic skills to work toward the attainment of such a relationship, all in the context of a workshop, or community, is to elicit from them the growth potential which lies within every person.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

MARRIAGE TODAY

The state of marriage today seems to be in an almost dichotomous situation. On one hand its viability is being seriously questioned in many sectors of society. In the United States -- as well as in much of the rest of the world --

marriage is in the process of being re-evaluated, redefined, and perhaps even reshaped. Many persons within marriage and many persons approaching marriage lack the sense of sureness which once prevailed.¹

In some instances the word that most characterizes many persons' attitude toward marriage might well be "disillusionment."

One source of the questioning and disillusionment is to be found in the rapid increase in the number of divorces in recent years. It was reported that in 1965 there were 479,000 divorces in the United States, or 2.5 per one thousand population, but by 1977 the number had risen to 1,097,000 divorces, or 5.1 per one thousand population.² In addition it is reported that more than 1,500,000 men and women, many under twenty-five years of age, lived together out of wedlock in 1977, a 14 percent increase from 1976.³ Finally, David and Vera Mace report only a

¹Lyle B. Gangsei, Manual for Group Premarital Counseling (New York: Associated Press, 1971), 11.

²U. S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1978, (99th edition; Washington: 1978), 79.

³Ibid., unnumbered addendum.

small number of the marriages they encountered in marriage enrichment programs were realizing their full potential, even though most desired a "relationship-in-depth." This occurred because early in the marriage the couple had become locked into a blocking, self-defeating interaction with one another.⁴ Yes, marriage and its viability in today's world is being questioned, it is even under attack, and many would say rightly so.

In the midst of this, however, most men and women who decide to live together today still decide to get married. Although the increase in the number of marriages is not as dramatic as in the case of divorces, there has been a steady rise over recent years. In 1965 it was reported that there were 1,800,000 marriages in the United States, or 9.3 per one thousand population. By 1977 the reported number was 2,176,000 marriages, or 10.1 per one thousand population.⁵ As shaky as marriage may seem to many persons, these statistics would seem to indicate that it is still with us -- indeed, never before has so large a proportion of the United States' population been married -- and it will be for some time to come.

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

In view of this contrast in the contemporary scene -- marriage being seriously questioned while at the same time being on the rise -- it

⁴David and Vera Mace, Marriage Enrichment Retreats (Philadelphia: Friends General Conference, n.d.), 7.

⁵U. S. Bureau of the Census, 79.

seems to me that the Church and its professional leadership have a unique opportunity and responsibility which can be carried out in at least two ways. One is to deal with the questioning of marriage as a viable part of life, to deal creatively with the disillusionment and lack of satisfaction many persons experience in marriage. This can be done through any one of a number of marriage enrichment programs available, programs which seek to make basically sound marriages better.

A second channel for the Church is to make its programs of premarital and/or newly wed preparation and enrichment more creative and effective. According to Nancy A. Hardesty of Emory University,

A recent psychological study learned that one reason Americans are so discontent and have such a high divorce rate is the myth that the euphoria of "being in love" is supposed to last forever. In reality it lasts at most six months. After that comes the difficult, frustrating, and often very painful process of living with the other day by day.⁶

If immediately prior to marriage, or within the first year or two of marriage, couples can be assisted to understand and make effective in their lives the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, and helped to acquire some of the skills to keep those dynamics alive and growing, then perhaps the discontent can be lessened, those things which keep couples from realizing fully the potentials of their relationship can be diminished, and the marriage be a happier, more productive, and satisfying one. It is this second area of opportunity which is addressed in this project.

⁶Nancy A. Hardesty, quoted in Perspective, Bulletin of the School of Theology at Claremont, XXI, 3 (November 1978).

Some Biblical - Theological Assumptions for Marriage Training.

The Christian Church has, as an important part of its ministry to persons, the task of assisting them to grow in understanding themselves and others, and their relationships with others. This role of the Church grows naturally from the ministry of Jesus the Christ, the Lord of the Church. Repeatedly we see Jesus in the Gospels relating to people in such a way that they came to see themselves anew, as in the encounter with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10, or the "Great Confession" in Matthew 16:13-19, where Simon is renamed Peter, and in the marginal story of John 8:2-11, the woman caught by the scribes and Pharisees in the act of adultery. This new self-understanding of persons is also found in some of Jesus' parables. For example, Jesus said of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32, "he came to himself," an indication of new self-understanding or -knowledge. Or see the new picture painted of Pharisees and publicans in Luke 18:10-14 as the first hearers of the parable must have. Surely they found new insights into their own characters as well as that of God. Helping persons understand themselves, and in the process to understand others, was an important part of Jesus' ministry. As the "Body of Christ" in today's world surely the Church cannot give any less importance to helping persons in the same way.

It is this understanding of self and others that leads to personal growth, to further realization of the achievable potential every person possesses. No one ever reaches perfection, there is always more of "me" to be discovered by me. A classic example of this is the apostle Paul. A Jew by birth, a Pharisee by training, a persecutor of the

primitive Church by choice and by appointment, he seems to be the least likely candidate for the New Testament apostolate. Yet within him there was the potential to become one of the greatest, if not the greatest, New Testament Christian of all. Founder of numerous congregations, spearhead of the Christian missionary movement, theologian par excellence, Paul became a human embodiment of the potential growth that is spoken of by Jesus in the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31; Mark 4:31; Luke 8:5). Whatever Paul was, there was within him far more than showed outwardly, and God was able to use that, along with the inner push and pull toward personal growth that all God's children possess, to lead Paul into the personal growth that made him the great figure he became in the early Church and its life. Every person in every age possesses the same potential for growth, the same possibilities for moving ahead into a fuller realization of his-her potential. The Church, through a committed ministry, both lay and clergy, can and must be a facilitating force in such growth.

Finally, a biblical-theological concern is the wholeness of persons, the goal of personal growth. It is God's desire, the biblical message tells us, that we experience wholeness, that our entire beings know health, well-being, completeness. That seems to me to be one message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Concern for the younger son's wholeness as a person is shown by the father in his willingness to divide his estate between the two sons before his death, and allowing the prodigal to convert his share to cash and go his own way. This would have to be done at the father's expense, but it would allow the son to become, hopefully, the person he had the potential to

be. This concern is also demonstrated when the son comes home after having fallen onto such hard, even destitute times, after he had squandered all he had. The father welcomes the young man back not as a servant but as the son he has always been. In the context of the times this is to see the son as a whole person, and in that to move him toward an experience of his wholeness. This fatherly concern for the wholeness of his children is also seen in his conversation with the older son, as he seeks to help him understand that knowing a person assumed to be dead is alive is cause and more to rejoice and celebrate. A part of our wholeness as persons comes from the relationships, both continuing and restored, we have with other persons. As the Church seeks to facilitate the growth of individuals and couples toward their wholeness as persons, it is acting on sound biblical and theological ground.

The implementation of this ministry can be done in many ways, in many settings, and at many points. One of those points is marriage, one of the "life-cycle crises." Premarital and/or newly wed training can be an extension of the way in which Jesus related to people and caused personal growth to take place within them.

Recently I was asked, "Why should the Church assume it has the obligation, or the right, to ask engaged couples to go through a process or time of premarital preparation?" My answer is that marriage is a complex relationship that demands from both partners, among other things, a flexibility and an openness to change if the marriage is to realize its full potential. New understandings of self and others are necessary, and couples planning to be married must be made aware of this and equipped to handle it in their relationship. Furthermore, the dynamics of

interpersonal relationships are intensified in marriage, and couples who enter into marriage unprepared or poorly prepared are like a ship's captain who sails without any navigational aids and ignores all landmarks — it is possible to reach port, but the journey will be extremely difficult, perhaps even perilous. The Church does have a responsibility to help those persons who come to it to be married prepare as fully as possible, so that they may grow in their relationship, individually and together, realizing as much of their marriage potential as possible.

The Church vs. a Secular Setting.

At this point another question may be raised: Why do premarital and/or newly wed training in a church rather than in a secular setting? The question has a certain validity, for most clergypersons are not fully trained, professional counselors. It may seem, therefore, that a professional, licensed counselor, or even a highly trained para-professional, would be a more logical facilitator of such premarital and/or newly wed training. However, while a secular counselor, clinically trained and licensed, can offer undeniable and often desirable strengths, and, perhaps, advantages, the claim can still be made for premarital and/or newly wed training to be done in the Church.

The reason for such a claim is this: Although no statistics are available to validate it, it is my guess that a very large percentage, perhaps even the majority, of marriage ceremonies conducted in the United States each year take place in a church (and if not in a church building the ceremony is conducted by a clergyperson). This would be true, I believe, for both churched and unchurched couples. In my own experience

the overwhelming majority of the wedding ceremonies I conduct are for couples who are not related to the Church in any but the slightest way, if at all. From time to time I have explored with such couples their reasons for wanting to be married in the Church, for desiring the Church's blessings, as it were, upon their marriage. Almost without exception it is because one or both persons believe there is something very special about marriage, and that "something" relates, again almost without exception, to their understanding of how the Church views and what it teaches about marriage. To explore that "something very special about marriage" and to discover what it uniquely offers to marriage is best done, I believe, in the context of the Church rather than a secular setting. This, coupled with the Church's historic role of serving persons in all their needs and at all the crisis points of the life-cycle, justifies a premarital and/or newly wed training program planned and enabled by and in the Church.

Difficulties in Providing Adequate Premarital Training.

No matter how committed a clergyperson may be to doing premarital preparation in the Church, however, there are difficulties in doing an adequate job. My own feeling at the conclusion of counseling with an engaged couple is often that I would have liked to explore with them more things than we had time for, or that there are areas that I would have liked to explore more deeply, but there simply was not enough time to do it. The contemporary pastor has multiple and complex demands made upon his-her time, requiring a working out of the most economical and effective use of time to minister to persons and their needs. Because of

this many clergypersons today find it very difficult, if not impossible, to give more than one, perhaps two sessions per couple to premarital preparation. Often this is hardly enough time to get acquainted.

A second thing is not so much a difficulty as it is a missed opportunity for greater, broader input and sharing in the premarital preparation process. I have, at times, been doing this kind of training with two, even three, engaged couples at or near the same time, and have thought what one couple said in response to a particular question might have helped another couple understand better what I was trying to get at. In a "one to one" (one clergyperson and one couple) situation that kind of sharing and stimulation does not happen. In the workshop approach proposed here it can happen.

The above feelings of the need for more adequate premarital preparation are not new. In 1968 Gerald Hill wrote:

...a good many of us would admit that we have been looking for some new ways of helping couples enter into marriage with a more adequate understanding of what is involved in this human relationship that promises such fulfillment, yet which brings so much struggle and disappointment to many. Some of us have a haunting feeling that we could —and should — be doing something more effective than at present.⁷

Because of such feelings new approaches to premarital counseling have been developed. This project proposes to utilize one of the new approaches in a specific way — a relational workshop.

⁷Gerald Hill, "Some Thoughts on Group Education for Engaged Couples," Pastoral Psychology, XIX, 184 (May 1968), 15.

A Workshop Approach to Premarital Preparation.

The thesis of this project is that the most effective premarital and/or newly wed training can be done in a group or workshop setting of four to five sessions, in which a clergyperson and three to eight couples explore some of the dynamics of the married relationship. Such an approach allows the clergyperson to use the same amount of time he-she would spend in a one or two session setting with each individual couple to do premarital preparation, but provide for a deeper and fuller exploration of each topic to be covered. It would also allow a broader sharing of ideas and questions, since more persons would be involved.

The purpose of this project is to provide a design for doing such group premarital and/or newly wed training by looking at marriage from a relational perspective and seeking to assist the participating couples in learning certain skills that can help strengthen their relationship with each other and with other persons. By "relational" I mean the major goal of the workshop approach, which is to focus on the relationship between the two persons about to be married, or who are newly wed. Relation can be defined as a "mutual connection" between them. The hoped-for result of the workshop is to deepen and enrich that connection, and to provide persons with skills which will help that deepening and enrichment to continue throughout their marriage.

The "skills" referred to are understandings, insights, and techniques regarding what I consider to be among the more important dynamics of the married relationship -- self-image, communication, trust, sexuality, and the spiritual or religious — and learning ways of

actualizing them, ways of keeping them alive and growing. The acquisition of such skills will take place through the use of what are broadly called "growth games," discussion, some presentation or "lecture" material, as well as in reading in books from a book table.

The workshop will not attempt to deal with all the issues present in marriage, nor even with all of what some may consider the major issues. In fact, it is not to be seen as being issue oriented, except, perhaps, in an indirect way. Rather, it will limit itself to the consideration of the above listed dynamics of the married relationship.

The Foundation of the Workshop.

The basis for the proposed workshop will be a sense or understanding of human relationship developed from a study of selected parables of Jesus. Once that understanding has been developed by a methodology to be described in the following chapter, I will seek to draw out or set forth the implications of it for the married relationship. The study will not attempt to describe or define human relationship in the New Testament as a whole, but will be confined to five of Jesus' parables: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14); The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); The Vineyard Workers (Matthew 20:1-16); The Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35); and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). It is not possible within the scope of this project to do a detailed study of either the entire New Testament or all of Jesus' parables as the basis of such an understanding or definition. Time and space preclude such an endeavor. In choosing what biblical material to work with the criterion has been, "Which of Jesus' parables speak most,

or have the most to say to human relationship?" The five parables selected fit that requirement for me.

This is not a process of premarital and/or newly wed training through Bible study. In fact there will be no Bible study in the traditional sense used in the workshop. The integration of biblical studies and pastoral care will be found in lifting up the parabolic understanding of human relationships as a goal to be worked toward, and the provision of skill-building opportunities to enable that working.

This project is not an attempt to interpret the Bible psychologically, but to provide a scriptural basis for the important psychological understanding of what it means to be human in relationships with other persons. It is a matter of psychology, or pastoral care, being informed by biblical studies. In that process, however, we may discover biblical studies are given an added horizon through answering the question, "How is human relationship to be seen in the light of Jesus' parables (at least in those selected for the study)?"

Chapter 2

RELATIONSHIP AS SEEN IN SELECTED PARABLES OF JESUS

If the premise stated above is accepted -- that the Church's ministry of helping persons grow in self- and other-understanding is a natural extension of Jesus' ministry -- then it seems logical that the workshop proposed here should utilize in some way, or base itself upon, the teachings of Jesus. It is my intention that this be done by drawing out from selected parables of Jesus a sense or understanding of human relationship. This understanding and its implications for marriage will then be used as the foundation for the pre- and early-marriage "relational workshop."

A study of the parables of Jesus has been settled upon because they make up more than one-third of Jesus' teaching (the breakdown is 16 percent in Mark's record of Jesus' teaching, 43 percent in Matthew's, 52 percent in Luke's, and 29 percent in the "Q" source, with the average for all four sources being 35 percent).¹ This is a significant amount of Jesus' teaching which cannot be ignored. Also, the parables are seen by many scholars as a device through which Jesus opened up a new dimension in human awareness, and they can, therefore, be invaluable in helping us understand human nature and interpersonal relationships. Finally, "the parables grasp in their special way something of Jesus' ministry and make

¹Archibald M. Hunter, Interpreting the Parables (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 7.

it available" today,² that is, they are as contemporary to us as they were to Jesus' first hearers.

The methodology to be used in this study is one initially suggested by Dr. Burton Mack of the School of Theology at Claremont. Its steps are: (1) establishment of parables as a source of Christian authority; (2) seeing how parables work to address an individual's assessment or reassessment of life as it is lived in relationship with others; and (3) seeing parables as an implicit model of human relationship. After these three steps have been worked through, I will seek to establish a parabolic definition of human relationship, using selected parables for the study.

Before proceeding to the consideration of parable and human relationship, however, one last thing should be said here. Joachim Jeremias echoes many scholars when he says:

The realization that the primitive Church related the parables to its own concrete situation, and by so doing produced a shift of emphasis is, as C. H. Dodd pointed out, of fundamental importance for the understanding of the five Parousia parables.³

To Jeremias' statement we might well add "and for most of the rest of the parables as well." The point to be made here is the fact that some of Jesus' parables were addressed to his critics rather than to his followers (an example is the Parables of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16) might be cause to wonder if those particular teachings have any authority and relevance to twentieth century Christians. The

²Dan Otto Via, The Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 37.

³Joachim Jeremias, Rediscovering the Parables (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 36-37.

answer, I believe, is that they do have both authority and relevance. Whether or not we can reconstruct their original settings, the parables do give us an understanding of God and ourselves, and for that we can rejoice and give thanks as we use them to better understand what it means to be human and to be Christian.

PARABLE AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

Parable as a Source of Christian Authority.

Can Jesus' parables be considered authoritative for the Christian? Story-telling (and parable is a form of story-telling) is, after all, a phenomenon or practice of every age, but we sometimes discover that stories traditionally ascribed to a particular teller are in reality not the product of his-her imagination and creativity after all. We also know that it was the practice of some writers in New Testament times to use, as a kind of nom de plume, the name of a better-known or more highly respected person in order to gain credibility for their work. We now know, for example, that some of the New Testament letters originally credited to the Apostle Paul are not his writing at all. This is also the case with other writings in the New Testament. Could it not be possible, then, that some of the parables supposed to have been told by Jesus did not come from his lips? And if this should be so, would it then not cast doubt upon them as a source of Christian authority?

This question would not seem to stand on substantial ground. According to Norman Perrin, "competent scholarly opinion would recognize

as authentic at least the following material,"⁴ among which he lists "the major parables," twenty in number. He states, "There is broad measure of agreement as to the text of the parables as parables of Jesus."⁵ This view of Jesus' parables as being authentically his is supported by scholarship in general. Jeremias, for example, sees the parables as "part of the bed-rock of tradition," claiming, "we are standing right before Jesus when reading his parables."⁶ Sallie TeSelle agrees with New Testament scholarship that "the parables not only are Jesus' most characteristic form of teaching but are among the most authentic strata in the New Testament."⁷ Finally, C. H. Dodd says, "Certainly there is no part of the Gospel record which has for the reader a clearer ring of authority."⁸ Thus it can be said that the parables, first because of this broad acceptance by scholars as authentic teachings of Jesus, are for the Christian a source of authority.

A second basis for the authority of the parables is the way in which they address, even confront the hearer or reader. How this address works in the life of a person will be dealt with at length in the next section, but it should be noted here that the parables "challenge the hearer to explore the manifest possibilities of the experience of God" as

⁴ Norman Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 41.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Jeremias, 9, 10.

⁷ Sallie TeSelle, Speaking in Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 74.

⁸ C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Nisbet, 1935), 11.

ruler⁹ by shattering "the deep structure of our accepted world.... They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God."¹⁰ In this way they become "bearers of reality for us,"¹¹ "a point of reference to human existence."¹² "In the parables Jesus verbalizes his understanding of existence in the world in such a way that that understanding of existence is now available as a possibility for the hearers."¹³ Anything which speaks in such a way to the depths of who we are as persons must be considered authoritative for our lives.

How Parables Address Assessment/Reassessment of Life.

The Nature of Parable. In seeking to understand the way in which parables work to address individual assessment or reassessment of how life is lived in relationship to other persons it may be helpful to begin by looking at the nature of this "most highly developed and distinctive element in [Jesus'] teaching."¹⁴ Sallie TeSelle states that "current scholarship sees the parable as an extended metaphor, that is, a story of ordinary people and events which is the context for envisaging and

⁹Perrin, 199.

¹⁰John Dominic Crossan, The Dark Interval (Niles, IL: Argus Communications, 1975), 121-122.

¹¹Perrin, 181.

¹²Ibid., 118.

¹³Ibid., 110.

¹⁴Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) 82.

understanding the strange and the extraordinary,"¹⁵ a claim borne out by an even casual reading of contemporary scholars such as Crosson, Perrin, Via, etc. But to speak of "envisaging and understanding the strange and the extraordinary" is not to imply that a parable is a way of one moving or being taken out of this world. The world of parable understood as metaphor is "two-dimensional, a world in which the 'religious' dimension comes to the 'secular' and reforms it."¹⁶ In that coming old words take on new meaning and the familiar is given a new context. Through that process new meaning comes into being.¹⁷ The important thing to be aware of here is that parable as metaphor uses the everyday language of people to help them gain new insight by redirecting attention "not to this or that attribute but, by means of imaginative shock, to a circumspective whole that presents itself as focalized in this or that thing or event."¹⁸

To see parable as metaphor is to see that "the meaning of the gospel is generated through...words which we 'know' but which are now put into a new context so that we see 'what is' in the light of 'what might be,' the ordinary emerges shaped by a new context."¹⁹ In this, metaphor differs radically from myth (which some detractors of parables might say

¹⁵TeSelle, 2.

¹⁶Ibid., 6.

¹⁷Ibid., 37.

¹⁸Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 21.

¹⁹TeSelle, 32.

they are). Whereas myth is a story in which normal "reality" can be ignored, metaphor is structured within normal "reality".²⁰

...parable is a metaphor of normalcy which intends to create participation in its referent. It talks of A so that one can participate in B, or, more accurately, it talks of x so that one can participate in X and so understand the validity of x itself. Its structural pattern is X-in-x, and the hyphens are not indispensable.²¹

What this means is that God, even though not explicitly mentioned in the parables themselves, through the parables meets us in our everyday lives. In this meeting we are moved to an assessment or reassessment of who we are and how we live in relationship with others.

TeSelle says, "metaphoric meaning is a process, not a momentary, static insight; it operates like a story, moving from here to there, from 'what is' to 'what might be.'"²² How parable works to bring about assessment of life-in-relationship can be seen in much the same way. It can almost be described as a step-by-step process. That kind of format will be used here, with the understanding that in any given parable the "steps" may not take place in the order noted, and that the parables may, in addition, go back and forth from one step to another. (It should also be said that every parable of Jesus does not necessarily follow every step to be described here.)

²⁰ John Dominic Crossan, In Parables (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 21.

²¹ Ibid., 15-16.

²² TeSelle, 33.

The Parabolic Process. The first step is that Jesus' stories attract one's attention and hold it. "The parables make men give attention, come alive and face things. And they do this by evoking men's everyday experience."²³ Jesus' parables contain the stuff of everyday life; if the events described in them did not actually happen, they could have. "The parables keep the reader anchored in the everyday world,"²⁴ "hearers find themselves in a familiar scene...."²⁵ Because "a parable tells a story which, on its surface level, is absolutely possible or even factual within the normalcy of life,"²⁶ the hearer or reader is attracted to it. Even more, his-her attention is often riveted by what is described in the parable, so real is the scene in some, so startling in others.

This attraction of attention is usually the first "step" in the parabolic process. Unless the attention of the potential hearer is attracted the parable cannot speak to him-her. However, in some cases this attraction is an ongoing thing, and the hearer's attention is continually attracted more and more as the parable develops.

There is a property of parable which comes into play at just about the point where the hearer's attention is firmly grasped by the story, and it is the second step of the process. It is

²³Amos N. Wilder, Early Christian Rhetoric (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 75, italics added.

²⁴Via, 181.

²⁵Jeremias, 10.

²⁶Perrin, Jesus and the Language, 158. Perrin here describes John Dominic Crossan's definition of a parable.

that there is in every parabolic situation a battle of basic structures. There is the structure of expectation on the part of the hearer and there is the structure of expression on the part of the speaker. These structures are in diametrical opposition, and this opposition is the heart of the parabolic event.²⁷

What happens as a result of these opposing structures is a reversal of what the hearers expect. It can be seen very readily in a number of Jesus' parables, such as in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14). Here a good Jew of Jesus' day would expect the Pharisee to be praised and the Tax Collector condemned, but just the opposite happens in the parable, and reversal of their status occurs, and with it a reversal of expectation on the part of the hearers.

Frank Kermode, a literary critic, is quoted by John Dominic Crossan as follows: "Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change." Crossan then comments, "Parables are fictions, not myths; they are meant to change, not reassure us."²⁸ Because of this, parables are created with a built-in reversal of expectations.

The result of this reversal is that the world of the parables' hearers is shattered so that new understandings, new insights may become possible. "I have interpreted the stories of Jesus as parables intended to shatter the structural security of the hearer's world and therein and thereby to render possible the kingdom of God...."²⁹ This shattering can be seen as the outgrowth of "the word of God itself piercing the

²⁷ Crossan, The Dark Interval, 66-67.

²⁸ Ibid., 56.

²⁹ Ibid., 123, italics added.

self-satisfaction and worldly care of man,"³⁰ the word which is "that strange truth that disrupts our ordinary world and moves us — and it — to a new place."³¹ It may seem contradictory for a parable to address persons in the terms and the context of their everyday world, catching their attention on that basis, and then shatter that very same world, but, as Crossan points out, "the Kingdom [of God] is that which in shaking man's world at its foundations establishes the dominion of God over all...worlds."³² The purpose of this shattering will be seen shortly.

This third part of our process, shattering one's world, means that "parable is always a somewhat unnerving experience,"³³ but it was precisely through this teaching method that Jesus challenged the old ways of thinking among his first hearers. It may even be that we sometimes do not want parables, we want programs. We would rather be told what to do, and parables refuse to do that. "They make us face the problem of the grounding of ethics and we want only to discuss the logic of ethics."³⁴

But the shattering, the unnerving, is all for a purpose — to make us think.

³⁰Via, 55, footnote on T. W. Manson, The Teachings of Jesus (2d ed.; Cambridge: University Press, 1948), 65, 66, 70-73, 81.

³¹TeSelle, 41.

³²Crossan, In Parables, 27.

³³Crossan, The Dark Interval, 56.

³⁴Crossan, In Parables, 82.

What the parable does is what most fiction does which deserves to be considered great art. It appeals to the imagination.... We enter into sympathetic relationship with the characters because they are created out of the same pool of existence as our own experience.³⁵

Indeed, Jesus sometimes begins his parables with the words, "What do you think?" and, according to Hunter, "where the words are not found the question is implied."³⁶ Hunter even goes so far as to claim that parables "are designed to make people think" by appealing to the imagination.³⁷

A second way the thinking process is stimulated is by the parable sometimes leaving the outcome of the situation, if not in doubt, at least not immediately apparent.³⁸ In the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), for example, the story gives no indication of whether the hard feelings of the older son toward the younger son and the father are ever resolved in any way, satisfactory or other. In light of this one may wonder about that situation, think about it and what might have been the outcome of the father's invitation to his older son to join the feast.

Finally, Jesus sometimes moves his hearers and readers to thought by the concluding words, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." This may very well mean, "This is more than just a pleasant story. Go and

³⁵ Geraint Vaughan Jones, The Art and Truth of the Parables (London: S. P. C. K., 1946), 167.

³⁶ Hunter, 12.

³⁷ Ibid., 13.

³⁸ Dodd, 16; Via, 10.

work it out for yourselves."³⁹ In this way the listener or reader is drawn into the parable as a participant, not only invited but compelled to draw conclusions and make applications to life.⁴⁰

In many ways it is this thinking as a participant which I see as the heart of understanding the parables in this methodology. If Jesus' parables are to become a paradigm for our everyday interpersonal relationships then they must be more than stories we simply observe from a detached, objective stance. As TeSelle says:

...if the parable "works," the spectators become participants, not because they want to necessarily or simply have "gotten the point" but because they have, for the moment, "lost control" or as the new hermeneuts say, "been interpreted." The secure, familiar everydayness of the story of their own lives has been torn apart; they have seen another story — the story of a mundane life like their own moving by a different "logic," and they begin to understand (not just with their heads) that another way of believing and living — another context or frame for their lives -- might be possible for them.⁴¹

This brings us to the fifth step in our process of seeing how parables lead one to personal assessment of life-in-relationship. It is understanding parables as "a collection of pictures and stories which constantly have a single point of reference, a point of reference to human existence."⁴² What does it mean to be human? It is this question toward which all that has been thus far described in the parabolic

³⁹Hunter, 12.

⁴⁰Funk, 135.

⁴¹TeSelle, 79.

⁴²Perrin, Jesus and the Language, 118. This is Perrin's restatement of Jüngel's fifth conclusion regarding parables.

process points us. This is what Wilder calls "the art of the parable,"⁴³ what Via describes as "the translatable content of the parables."⁴⁴

However, it is not simply existence as we experience it in the "here and now" that the parables compel us to consider. It can safely be said that we need no help in doing that! All that is necessary for that is to live day by day. What Jesus' parables did, and do, was that they "injected a new possibility into the situation of his hearers. The latter were offered a new way of understanding their situation in history."⁴⁵

This is certainly the case if one accepts, as is done here, Perrin's contention that "the Kingdom of God is the ultimate referent of all the parables of Jesus."⁴⁶ Perrin makes this claim in light of the work done by the "new hermeneutic" school of parable interpretation, which he says

has shown that the parables of Jesus were much more than illustrations explaining a difficult point, or than telling weapons in a controversy; they were bearers of the reality with which they were concerned. It is the claim of this [modern] research that the parables of Jesus mediated to the hearer an experience of the Kingdom of God.

It is in that "experience" that this fifth step takes place. In his discussion, Perrin says that the Kingdom, or "Reign", as I prefer, of

⁴³Wilder, 71.

⁴⁴Via, 46.

⁴⁵Ibid., 53.

⁴⁶Perrin, Jesus and the Language, 55.

⁴⁷Ibid., 56.

God "is not an idea or a conception, it is a symbol," which is capable of representing or evoking a number or series of ideas or conceptions. As a symbol, the Reign of God "evokes the myth of the activity of God as king on behalf of his people," an activity which can be seen and understood in different ways.⁴⁸ That activity and its purpose(s) becomes the focal point of the fifth step, a presentation of new understandings of existence and human relationship.

By this I mean that one of the purposes of God's activity in the life of his-her people can be seen in terms of God calling and assisting that people to the realization of their full potential as persons, that is, showing the possibility of, and helping in closing the gap between what/who we are and (1) what/who God intends and calls us to be, and (2) what/who we are, with God's help, capable of being and becoming. To live in the Reign of God is to become who we are capable of becoming.

It seems to me that unless the shattering of world (step three) and stimulation to thought-participation (step four) lead to the discovery of new understanding of what it means to be human, the parable has done only half its task. Put in another way, if God, or the Reign of God as symbol of God's activity in my life, only convinces me of the shortcomings of my present understanding and/or actions, and does not hold before me a new and better way, then I have been given only half a loaf and remain hungry. One of the great values and beauties of the parables for me has always been that they present, implicitly or explicitly, that better way. This is underlined by Eta Linneman, who

⁴⁸ Ibid., 33-34.

according to Perrin, "understands a successful parable as an event that decisively alters a situation, creating possibilities that did not exist before in the situation of the one addressed by the parable."⁴⁹

How parable works to accomplish this presentation of a new understanding of human existence can be seen in the imagery used by Murray Krieger, imagery adopted by Dan Otto Via. Krieger, a literary critic, says that if a literary work (and I believe parable is that) operates properly,

it is related to the world sequentially as window, mirror, and window. First, it is a set of windows through which we see the familiar world referentially. Then the windows become mirrors reflecting inwardly on each other. In this set of reflecting mirrors the familiar and the hitherto unperceived are organized in a new pattern of connections so that in this pattern there is an implicit or preconceptual existential understanding. Finally the mirrors become windows again giving us a new vision of the world.⁵⁰

An illustration of this is the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), where Jesus offers a new understanding of Jewish-Samaritan relationships. Prior to hearing this parable Jesus' first hearers could never have imagined an apostate Samaritan even capable of feeling neighborly toward a Jew, let alone themselves capable of acting toward an enemy in the way the Samaritan acted toward the beaten Jew in the story. As the parable begins the listeners look through a set of windows at their familiar world seen referentially, thinking, perhaps, that it is an anti-clerical story, as both priest and Levite pass by on

⁴⁹ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁰ Via, 84; cf. Murray Krieger, A Window to Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964,), 30-31, 33-36, 59-65.

the other side. But as the Samaritan, rather than also passing by, stops to render aid to the robbed and beaten man, the windows become mirrors in whose reflections a new pattern of understandings comes forth regarding not only Jews and Samaritans but all persons. Finally, as Jesus asks, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" and says, "Go and do likewise" to the lawyer's answer, "The one who showed mercy on him" (Luke 10:36-37), the mirrors become once again windows through which a new vision of the world of human relationships is seen.

In discussing the Parable of the Ten Maidens (Matthew 25:1-13), Via sums up, I believe, the point being made in my claim for this fifth step. He says:

...the nature of the parables, as well as the inherent possibilities of the case, points to the fact that Jesus was not giving information about his situation but an understanding of the possibilities of existence which his situation brought.⁵¹

The final step in the process is to see that Jesus' parables are, ultimately, a call to decision.

Like the man who found the treasure, or the pearl merchant who found the one pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46), the hearer must stake all on one thing — that he can win the future which Jesus proclaims to him.⁵²

In each instance in these "twin parables" the characters must decide what to do: Will it be to keep what they already have or sell it all in order to obtain what they have found? In the same way, we too must decide when

⁵¹ Ibid., 39, italics added.

⁵² Ernst Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1964), 213-228, especially 220.

confronted by the parables of Jesus. Having gone through the process of our attention being caught, experiencing a reversal of our expectations, the shattering of our familiar world, and through our thought-participation being presented with new understandings and new possibilities of human existence, what will we do? We must say "Yea" or "Nay," accept what Jesus says about the Reign of God and its demands upon us or reject it. Like the men in the "twin parables" we must ask, "Am I willing to give up what I have in order to obtain this new possibility?" The decision is always ours, for "while Jesus' parables placed the hearers inescapably in the situation of decision, Jesus could not determine how people would decide."⁵³ Whatever our decision, parables inexorably move their hearers or readers to decide that Jesus is right and we go with him, or that he is wrong and we go our own way.

We shall see later how this six step process is used with specific parables chosen for the study.

Parable as Implicit Model of Relational Structure.

In seeking to understand parables as implicit models of human relationship there are some questions that may arise, and they need to be dealt with at the outset of this section. It may be pointed out, for example, that many of Jesus' parables end with a generalized saying, such as the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), which concludes with these words: "So the last shall be first, and the first last." "Does not this saying," it may be asked, "give the parable its

⁵³Via, 54.

meaning?" Joachim Jeremias points out that although there are now eight parables which end abruptly "with no explicit application," the number of parables "in which Jesus left his hearers to draw their own conclusion was considerably greater," pointing to the Gospel of Thomas for support, where only three parables have a concluding interpretation.⁵⁴ He says that there was a strong tendency in the early Church to add such endings to Jesus' parables, and that where they are found these generalized sayings are to be treated as secondary. This is not to question their importance to Christians, rather it is only to claim that they were not part of the parable as originally told.⁵⁵ This view is generally supported by New Testament scholarship, and it can be said that the interpretation of Jesus' parables is not limited by the sayings which have been attached to them by the early Church.

A second matter which must be addressed here is the "single point" theory of interpretation. Simply stated, it is that each parable has one point to make and only one point. It is based upon the monumental work of Adolph Jülicher in the late nineteenth century, in which he refuted the, until then, traditional understanding of parable as allegory, seeing it, instead, as a story told for its own reason and no other.⁵⁶ In doing so, Jülicher put forth the claim that each parable had only a single point to make.

⁵⁴Jeremias, 82.

⁵⁵Ibid., 85.

⁵⁶Adolf Jülicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu, 2 vols. (Tubingen: Mohr, 1888, 1889). It must be noted here that my understanding of Jülicher comes from reading others such as Perrin, Via, etc.

Until recent years this view was accepted as the standard for interpreting the parables of Jesus. It is, however, beginning to be questioned by contemporary scholarship. Norman Perrin, commenting on the work of Robert W. Funk, points out that the latter

argues that the parable as metaphor is not "amenable to ideational reduction." In a concrete situation it may be said to have a particular "point," in that it comes to have a particular meaning in that particular situation. But the parable can be spoken into many different situations, in which case it is possible that it may have "many points, as many points as there are situations into which it may be spoken."⁵⁷

It must be noted here that Funk emphasizes the word "possible" because "prudence is required" in finding "as many points as there are situations."⁵⁸ The specific way in which more than a single point can be found in parables will be seen later. My purpose here is to make the point that parables are not limited to one point in their teaching.

Finally, in response to these questions, I would pose a question of my own. Is it not possible that an understanding of human relationship in Jesus' parables can come as much from the way in which the parables address or confront persons, that is, by movement through the six step process outlined above, as from the generalized "conclusions" or the "point" of the parables themselves? It is my contention that the answer is "Yes!" I hope to validate my answer in what follows.

If, instead of regarding and interpreting parables as neatly boxed teachings with a single point usually made by a generalized saying

⁵⁷ Perrin, Jesus and the Language, 137.

⁵⁸ Funk, 151.

at their conclusion, we see parables as an art form,⁵⁹ then new and valid insights may come to us. As Jones says, "the immediate application of the parable seldom exhausts its meaning," and he argues for the possibility of "a much wider application of the narrative's individual symbols than may have been provided for" in the original context. Jones is also aware that it is "impossible to say whether the narrator intended more to be read into them than the historical circumstances required."⁶⁰ Jones' contention is borne out by Via's comment that one danger in using Jülicher's one point method of interpretation "is that important elements in the parable may be overlooked and the meaning of the parable attenuated...."⁶¹ This means that a parable need not be constrained to a single teaching, but can speak to a variety of needs and questions created by the human situation.

In seeking to interpret parables from this broader perspective care must be taken not to allegorize them. To do this can be very easy when dealing with an art form, which Jesus' parables are. It can be as if one is standing before an abstract painting and determining what each form and shape on the canvas symbolizes and miss what the artist intended the painting as a whole to mean. That is not what is sought after here.

To interpret the parables from a broader perspective in this paper is to look at more than the events which take place in them, to look at more than the characters described in the story. It is to

⁵⁹Jones, x-xi.

⁶⁰Ibid., 107-108.

⁶¹Via, 3.

examine the parables from a "relational" perspective, to ask what kind of interpersonal relationships can be seen in what takes place, and to ask what all that means in terms of human relationship as I experience it. In this way we move to a kind of "extended interpretation" which "can be described as 'existential' (though not in the philosophically technical sense)...."⁶² At the same time, care must be taken to let the parables speak to the interpreter and not the interpreter to the parable, because

the test of the rightness or wrongness of any interpretation of the parable is not whether it conforms to some preconceived idea of what the parable ought to be, but the extent to which it is congruous with the parable as a whole.⁶³

If one can look at parables from this broader perspective, I believe that there can be seen in them an implied model or models of relational structure. Precisely how this is done will now be looked at, using certain of Jesus' parables as the basis for the study. The parables selected for the study are: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:(25)30-37); The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14); The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32); The Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:(21)23b-35); and The Vineyard Workers (Matthew 20:1-16).

A NEW TESTAMENT PARABOLIC DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIP

In this study an attempt will be made to combine the "classical" interpretation, that is, the interpretation which comes from the new hermeneuts, and the "extended" interpretation mentioned above. In

⁶²Jones, 162.

⁶³Ibid., 108.

seeking to do this, particular attention will be given to the fifth part of the six-step approach to the parables which has been outlined in this chapter, which is the parable's presentation of a new understanding of human existence, or the presentation of new possibilities for human relationship which I believe can be found in the parables. When this understanding is applied to marriage it will serve as the foundation for the relational workshop to be designed in this project.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (or Publican) (Luke 18:9-14).

In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector the first hearers' attention must have been immediately attracted to the picture painted by Jesus' words. The idea of a Pharisee and a tax collector praying side by side in the Temple would be almost startling, and by creating such a scenario Jesus presents an intriguing and lasting impression. Contrary to the contemporary Christian view of Pharisees --almost invariably a bad one -- these men in Jesus' day were highly respected within the Jewish community. Their poor reputation among twentieth century Christians is largely undeserved. At the same time, tax collectors were among the worst kind of sinners in Judaism, for they not only worked for the hated Roman government, they gained their usually large wealth by cheating the people, collecting far more in taxes than was required by the Romans. Thus a story in which such a righteous person as a Pharisee, a respected religious leader, and such an utterly unrighteous sinner stood alongside one another in prayer would certainly rivet one's attention on the scene described.

As the story proceeds, a first century Jew would certainly expect a highly respected Pharisee who not only observed the law but went beyond its requirements to have his prayer accepted by God and be justified. Here is a man who fasted twice weekly when private or individual fasting was not required at all, and who tithed not only on the agricultural products, as required, but on all he received.⁶⁴

On the other hand is a tax collector, guilty of collusion with the enemy, a crook and a grafter, whose sin in his occupation is tantamount to apostasy. As a tax collector he had, in effect, removed himself beyond the pales of Judaism. How could he pray any prayer which would justify him?

But the hearers' expectations regarding these two men and their prayers are not realized. Instead, there is a dramatic reversal, as Jesus says that the tax collector is justified rather than the Pharisee!

In this reversal of expectations comes a shattering of one's world, for if a person who is as righteous as the Pharisee is not justified in God's sight, what hope is there? This question is especially pertinent in light of the extraordinary piousness of the Pharisee in the parable.

Also, since the prayer of the tax collector is actually "an expression of despair"⁶⁵ does Jesus mean here that one must reach that point in life in order to be justified? If so, then the law is, at least

⁶⁴The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), VIII, 309.

⁶⁵Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 143.

in a sense, little more than a whip with which to scourge oneself, and striving to obey or fulfill it is futile.

When seen from the perspective of a first century Jew, this parable is truly a world-shattering event, for its outcome is beyond normal belief for a person of that time and that religion.

Because of what takes place in the parable, one cannot, even today, avoid involvement in it as thought participant. The parable raises several questions with which its hearers must deal. For example, "If a person who is accepted by the community as righteous is not by his-her life accepted by God as justified, while a person who in the community's sight is not seen as righteous is justified by God, what does this say about my life before God? Is it necessary for me to become as the lowest form of sinner in order to be justified? What sense is there in that?"

Again, "What are the 'rules' or 'guidelines' God uses to decide who is justified and who is not? Indeed, are there any 'rules' at all? Does obedience and more to the law count as nothing? Is sin, no matter how great, no longer offensive to God?"

Finally, "If this is how God treats those who sin, what does it say to me about how I should treat them?" Special care must be taken here, in terms of our relational interpretation, to see that the sinner is a repentant sinner. The tax collector knows and admits who he is — a sinner against God and his brothers and sisters in the law.

In the shattering of world which compels us to become participants in the parable, we begin to see the light of new possibilities dawn upon us. One of the things a thoughtful assessment of

the parable teaches us is that true righteousness is not found in obedience to a law developed by ourselves, but in throwing oneself on God's mercy, as the tax collector did.⁶⁶ God is less impressed with our good works than with our total reliance on divine grace and mercy for the foundations of life.

Another thing we see as a new understanding for our existence is that God's grace is not limited to me alone, even in my righteousness, no matter how great it may be, but is also granted to my neighbor, even though he-she may be unrighteous in my sight. To assume otherwise is to become self-righteous and ultimately rejected by God.⁶⁷

That being true, we discover that there is a commonality among us, in which God calls us not to separate ourselves from those to whom we may feel spiritually, or in any other way, superior, but to stand with them as equals before God. In the Christ we are brothers and sisters to all.

Having seen this, I must now decide: Do I accept or reject what Jesus teaches in this parable? If I reject it I can go on living in my old ways, but if I accept it there will be required of me change regarding my relationship with other persons. I may find that change difficult to accept and actualize in my life, but it may be that only in that change can I hope to "go down to my house justified." Will I answer "Yea" or "Nay" to Jesus in this parable?

⁶⁶ Eta Linnemann, Jesus of the Parables (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 63.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

In considering the parables from a relational perspective it is necessary, after going through the six step process, to ask, "In light of what I see being taught in this parable, what implications are there for human relationship?" This question will be asked of each parable in this study. In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector I hear a strong message concerning the necessity, as a Person of God, to be accepting of other persons, regardless of their "sin," forgiving them, especially when they are repentant, rather than expecting them to obey my code of behavior, or to meet my standards. I believe the parable says, by implication, that judgement of a person's worth, or righteousness, or justification is God's right, not mine. In this sense we are equals before God, and I must accept and treat others as equals.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan there are two sources of attraction for the hearer's attention. The first is in the priest and the Levite, and they attract the attention because "the priesthood (of which the Levites were a lower order) was in bad repute at the time of Jesus."⁶⁸ The general anti-clerical feeling of the day would have had the first hearers of this parable hoping that these two men would be ridiculed, or at least had their lack of concern for the beaten man held up to serious question.

The second source of attraction for the hearer's attention is, of course, the Samaritan. In fact, the entrance of this man upon the scene,

⁶⁸Ibid., 53.

showing compassion and giving aid to the victim of the robbers, absolutely rivets one's attention to the parable. Samaritans were, in Jewish eyes, at best half-heathens. Jews believed them to be the descendants of colonists brought by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, after he had conquered Samaria in 722 B. C. Antipathy between Jews and Samaritans was great. Thus, for such an enemy to offer aid to a wounded Jew would have been unthinkable. However, in this parable that aid is offered, firmly claiming the listener's attention.

The expectations of Jesus' first hearers are closely related to what attracts their attention, as is usually the case in the parables. There are two or three expectations which can be seen here, along with their reversals. One is that even though priests and Levites were not in favor at that time, one would expect that one or both would have responded to a fellow Jew in need, but this expectation is not realized, it is reversed. A parallel expectation is that because the two clergy-persons do pass by on the other side of the road, a Jewish layperson will be next on the scene and give aid to the wounded man. The emergence of the Samaritan reverses this expectation.

A second expectation and its reversal is found in the Samaritan's actions. Because of the enmity between Jews and Samaritans he, too, will be expected to pass by on the other side. Instead, in a dramatic reversal, the Samaritan stops, and with compassion tends to the wounded traveler. Furthermore, this reversal continues as the Samaritan takes the beaten Jew to an inn where he not only "took care of him" (Luke 10:34) but paid the innkeeper money to nurse him back to health.

The third reversal of expectation is at the end of the conversation between Jesus and the lawyer. While Jesus' hearers would undoubtedly approve of the Samaritan's actions toward the half-dead Jew, they would have hardly expected Jesus to suggest that they should act in like manner, showing love and mercy to an enemy. That very thought would have been unpalatable.⁶⁹ But through the word to the lawyer, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37), this is precisely what they are told they must now do. Their expectation of how an enemy may be treated is reversed.

In that third reversal Jesus' listeners find their world shattered, as they see that no human being, not even a Samaritan, is beyond the range of one's love,⁷⁰ and it may even be that one's neighbor is "the man whom one despises most."⁷¹ Hearing this parable led Jesus' hearers to "saying the impossible," that even a hated Samaritan is the Jew's neighbor, thus "having their world turned upside down and radically questioned in its presuppositions."⁷²

In many ways the crux of this part of the parabolic process lies in the fact that the story of the Good Samaritan is "concerned with fulfilling and not fulfilling the Jewish law of loving the neighbor." Although bound by the law, the priest and Levite do not fulfill it, even though it is the law of God; the Samaritan, on the other hand, is not in Jewish eyes bound by the law yet he fulfills "it as the natural law of

⁶⁹Jones, 118.

⁷⁰Jeremias, The Parables, 205.

⁷¹Jones, 115.

⁷²Crossan, In Parables, 65.

man's conscience."⁷³ To see matters of human relationship from this perspective shatters a world in which prejudices and hatreds based on race, nationality, religion, etc., were not only allowed but even encouraged, replacing it with one in which enemies amazingly become neighbors.

One helpful way of seeing how a hearer of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is drawn into it as a thought participant is to view it as both creature of and creator of questions. In the first instance, the parable is created by a question, as the lawyer seeks "an indication of where, within the community, the limits of the duty of loving were to be drawn. How far does my responsibility extend? That is what the question ["Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25)] means."⁷⁴ Having had one's attention thus engaged, one must now deal with the same question for one's own life, and is a thought participant in its drama.

But the creature is also a creator, a creator of questions such as, "Is it possible to let 'other concerns to override the challenge of the stranger's needs?'"⁷⁵ This is what the priest and Levite did, with those "other concerns" readily supplied by the listener's mind. In grappling with this question the hearer must ask, "Do I also do the same?"

⁷³Perrin, Jesus and the Language, in discussing Jüngel's interpretation of this parable, 119-120.

⁷⁴Jeremias, Rediscovering the Parables, 159.

⁷⁵Perrin, Rediscovering the Teachings, 123.

Another question the parable raises is "What is demanded of me as I live in relationship with other persons? What is the nature and duty of love to my neighbor, who I see in the story is any person and every person?" One cannot view the priest, Levite, and Good Samaritan, and their actions without dealing with this question and in the process becoming a participant in the parable's drama.

What new understandings of human existence does the Parable of the Good Samaritan present? Surely one is that the way to life is not through theological knowledge but through action, action being seen as love to God and to neighbor.⁷⁶ The lawyer seeks information about the way to eternal life; Jesus confronts him with the action of the Samaritan.

Another new understanding concerns that action, telling us that it is to respond to human need in whatever ways are appropriate to the immediate situation.⁷⁷ In this the parable calls us to move from "inauthentic existence" in a world and life "basically controlled by a law that is as complete as possible" to "authentic living"⁷⁸ in which we act in response to and according to the need we find in others' lives.

A final new understanding is that the highest value in God's sight, and therefore it must also be in ours, is self-sacrificial love. Nothing else can take its place, and a compassionate person, even though

⁷⁶Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, 202.

⁷⁷Perrin, Rediscovering the Teachings, 124.

⁷⁸Linnemann, 55.

he-she be a Samaritan, is "more deserving of blessing than the selfish Jewish Temple official."⁷⁹

The call to decision in this parable can be very simply stated as that of choosing a life of involvement or of non-involvement.⁸⁰ Jesus here calls us to involvement with other persons, regardless of who they may be. Will we answer "Yea" or "Nay" to that call?

The implications of the Parable of the Good Samaritan for human relationship may be stated in a four-fold way:

1. We must be governed by the needs of the persons who confront us in life, those whom we meet in our day to day living.⁸¹

2. True human relationship with those persons involves the self-sacrificing practice of love.

3. That love for other persons must be boundless,⁸² excluding none and accepting all persons as neighbor.

4. The beaten man in the story is the neighbor we are to love; the Samaritan is the neighbor we are to be.⁸³

⁷⁹Perrin, Jesus and the Language, in discussing Jülicher's interpretation of the Good Samaritan, 97.

⁸⁰Jones, 154.

⁸¹Linnemann, 56.

⁸²Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, 202.

⁸³Mary Ann Tolbert, Perspectives on the Parables (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 60.

The Parable of the Vineyard Workers (Matthew 20:1-16).

Unlike the two parables thus far considered, the Parable of the Vineyard Workers attracts attention from its first listeners not by the community's view of the persons portrayed, or even so much by the actions of the characters in the story, but by the way in which Jesus introduces it and by a concept of how persons should treat others in business. The first attraction of attention is in Jesus' words at the outset of the parable: "For the kingdom of heaven is like..." (Matthew 20:1). In Jesus' day there was considerable interest in the Reign of God, and these opening words would have caught the attention of the first listeners.

As the parable unfolds attention continues to be more and more attracted. As the vineyard owner continues to hire workers throughout the day, promising to pay each group "whatever is right" (Matthew 20:4), the listeners are caught up in a consideration of justice and fairness. If a man hired at the beginning of the day is to receive one denarius, how much less will a man who works only one hour, or one-twelfth of the working day receive? This is especially pertinent when one knows that a denarius was about what it cost a man to feed his family for one day. The question of fairness, and one's attention, is intensified as each and every worker is paid one denarius, regardless of how long he had worked.

The unfolding attraction of attention leads the listeners to expect the vineyard owner to treat each group of workers in a different way. The words "whatever is right I will give you" (Matthew 20:4) naturally lead one to expect that payment of wages will be commensurate with hours worked. When the men who worked only one hour are paid a

denarius it would seem only right that each succeeding group of workers would receive something more than the preceding group. Even when the second and third group to be paid receive one denarius it is still logical to expect those who worked the entire day, those "who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat" (Matthew 20:12), would receive more. Such an expectation would seem more than justified, for this is, after all, a parable about the Reign of God. But no! the expectation is reversed as all are paid the same amount.

A second reversal might be seen when the first hired seek to present their grievance, and the owner not only denies their claim for a larger wage than the others but also denies them the possibility of future employment by him. The words "Take what belongs to you, and go" (Matthew 20:14) are seen by some scholars as a permanent dismissal, or firing.⁸⁴ Surely a fair and just employer would explain his generosity in a reasonable way, and not take this rather extreme step of firing these men for seeking what they believed was rightfully theirs. This expectation of fairness and justice (as seen in human terms, at least) is quickly and dramatically reversed.

In that reversal the world which is shattered is one in which we expect God to deal with us according to our merit. This is how a first century Jew viewed matters -- one earned God's love by obedience to the law. The Parable of the Vineyard Workers does away with the merit system, substituting for it God's grace, mercy, and generosity. In this

⁸⁴ See Via, 154.

new "system" all persons, regardless of their merit in human eyes, are given by God a place and the means to exist meaningfully.⁸⁵

The thought-participation in this parable begins with what seems to be the severity and injustice of the employer. The listeners are drawn into the scenario, most likely on the side of the first hired workers, and are almost forced to deal with the question of what is fairness and justice if the parable is what "the kingdom of heaven is like" (Matthew 20:1).

But this thought participation continues even more forcefully as the listener must deal, both externally and internally, with the householder's words: "Friend, I am doing you no wrong...." "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge me my generosity?" (Matthew 20:13,15). It must be dealt with externally in the sense of it being said to us, and internally in the sense of our saying it to another. Whether we are the hearer or the speaker of these words, the parable says that this is how it is in the Reign of God, and that is cause for deep pondering.

What is being said here about human existence? Two things, at least. One is surely that reward, or even love, is not always in exact proportion to achievement or deserving. Rather, it is more often, and especially in the Reign of God, to be given on the basis of the giver's generosity. This brings an incalculable element into human relationships, wherein our security is not necessarily of our own doing but is the result of another person relating to and loving us.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 155.

A second new understanding this parable brought to human relationships was that graciousness and generosity are not based on merit but on love for the other person, on a caring for their well-being as a person, no matter how undeserved that may actually seem to be.⁸⁶ In Jesus' time a denarius was about what it took for a man to feed his family for one day, and to have paid less than that to the workers who had to spend only a part of the day, even only one hour, in the vineyard would have been to deny them and their families well-being for that day. Love, care, and concern for them as persons dictated that these men, too, be paid a denarius.

There seems to me to be two decisions called for in this parable. One is my answer to the question, "Am I willing to surrender myself to another person to the extent that I can and will depend on their graciousness and generosity of love to provide my personal security?" The second is this "Am I willing to treat others with that same gracious, generous love?"

The abandonment of merit as the basis of human relationship and fulfillment of need, and its replacement with generous love that seeks the other's well-being as a person is what this parable teaches us about human relationships.

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35).

When we turn to the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant we find yet another source of attention getting. In addition to the introductory

⁸⁶ Jeremias, Rediscovering the Parables, 108-111.

words, "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to...", there is the enormous amount the servant owes the king in the story, a debt so great it can be said to be beyond the conception of this parable's first hearers. Most of the people who heard Jesus tell this parable would probably have considered themselves lucky to be able to call ten to twenty denarii their own. The ten thousand talents mentioned in the parable amount to one hundred million denarii, and it really means here "infinitely much."⁸⁷ A story in which at the outset one person owes another a debt of such magnitude is certainly, in first century times, an attention getter.

A further attraction of attention here is to be found in the fact that such a huge debt could be owed by a single individual, and so easily, it seems, forgiven by the one to whom it was owed. Consider, for example, that "the entire tribute paid to Rome by Galilee and Peraea in 4 B. C. amounted to two hundred talents, one fiftieth of that" in the parable.⁸⁸ The idea of one man alone owing ten thousand talents catches the attention in a firm, unshakeable grasp. In addition to that, there is the forgiveness of the debt in one fell swoop without the servant even asking for it. Remember, the servant asked only for more time in which to repay the king. The king's gesture, made in pity for the servant, is a striking one, designed to attract one's attention to the story.

Finally, the attraction of the hearer's attention continues as the servant comes "upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred

⁸⁷Linnemann, 108.

⁸⁸Tolbert, 90, italics added.

denarii" (Matthew 18:28), an amount that is one millionth of the debt from which he had just been released. Unable to pay the hundred denarii on demand, and making an identical request for more time, the second servant is imprisoned by the first. That unfeeling act now freezes one's attention upon the parable.

The reversal of expectations in this parable is not in what happens to the first servant, really, although there is surely surprise when the king so easily wipes the ten thousand talent debt from the ledger. The important reversal of expectation here is in the first servant's action toward the second man. One would naturally expect a person who had been forgiven such an incalculable debt as had the first servant to respond in like manner to one who owed him a debt which was minute by comparison. But he does not, and the hearer's expectation regarding the relationship between the two servants is reversed.

In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant an interesting thing happens which does not usually occur in Jesus' parables. The reversal of expectation sets up another expectation which this time is realized. Upon seeing how the unmerciful servant treats his fellow servant, one expects that if the king hears of it he will severely deal with the first servant, and in verse 34 we see that happen as the first servant is "delivered to the jailers until he should pay all his debt" of ten thousand talents.

One of the things that seems to have characterized human nature from the very beginning is a tendency to demand one's rights, however those may be understood. But this has often led to an individual insisting on that for him-herself while at the same time either denying

it to others or to ignoring them when their demand is made. A person living in that kind of world, and surely there were some among Jesus' first hearers, discovers that world shattered by the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. The request for and granting of an extension of repayment time for oneself must be accompanied by granting a similar request made to oneself. Demanding one's rights while not allowing another to do the same may and does lead to disastrous consequences.

Another world that is shattered by this parable is concerned with mercy. From the experience of the first servant comes the lesson that "if mercy by its nature has the character of an ordinance, it cannot be an 'exception,' but only the 'norm.'"⁸⁹ This means that mercy is not limited to extraordinary circumstances, but is found throughout all of life, all situations and all circumstances. For some, this shatters a world in which mercy is granted only to those who seem to stand in greatest need of it.

The thought participation aspect of this parable comes from our being able readily to identify with the persons in the story; "they are created out of the same pool of existence as our own experience."⁹⁰ We, too, have had times when we needed mercy to be shown us, and have received it, and we have had times when that need has not been fulfilled. Also, there have been times when we have both given and withheld mercy to or from others. But where the parable really draws us in as participants is in showing us that as we treat others we are likely to be treated.

⁸⁹ Linnemann, 112.

⁹⁰ Jones, 167.

It says to us that the condition of receiving forgiveness is being a forgiving person.

It is in that learning that a new understanding of human existence began to emerge for Jesus' first listeners and is reinforced within us. Simply stated, it is this: God has granted me forgiveness which knows no bounds -- even the most (to my mind) incalculable debt, or sin, is within the reach of that forgiveness. But this great gift of God places me under the necessity of treating others in the same way. To live in relationship with others is to wipe clean, when necessary, the slate.

In light of this, what will be my decision? Will I continue to insist on my rights, my due, or will I respond to a merciful God's call to show mercy to others?

When we examine the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant from the relational perspective, asking what it has to say, there are a number of things in answer. Some have already been hinted at, such as the limitlessness of mercy. Others include the idea that one of the deepest marks of love, which is a relationship, is its ability to forgive. Another, also mentioned previously, is that we must pass on to others the forgiveness we have experienced. Finally, "to have our legalistic understanding of life shattered by the transcendent as that which accepts and sustains us despite our offensiveness is to be open to others in their offensiveness."⁹¹

⁹¹Via, 143.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).

The final parable to be considered here is that of the Prodigal Son, considered by many to be the high point of Jesus' parabolic teaching. It is one of a group of three parables told by Jesus in response, according to Luke, to the Pharisees' and scribes' criticism that "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:1). The initial attraction of attention is in the younger son in the story as the father divides his property between his sons and the young man converts his share to cash so that he may leave home. This would have been very difficult to do, for under Jewish law even when a father's estate was divided before his death, his sons could not actually take possession until the father died. Thus, the Prodigal being able to gather "all he had" and take "his journey into a far country" (Luke 15:13) would have been very unusual, and Jesus' inclusion of that in the story would have attracted his listeners' attention from the very beginning.

Another attraction of attention is found in the Prodigal's return home after "coming to himself" (Luke 15:17). The parable's first hearers could understand how this could have happened after he had been "reduced to the lowest depths of degradation and practically forced to deny his religion at every turn."⁹² But to return to his father and ask to be taken back into the household, even though only as a servant would have been seen as an extreme act of temerity and gall, highly objectionable to

⁹²Jeremias, Rediscovering the Parables, 102.

a first century Jew. They now eagerly await the father's response, their attention firmly caught.

There are two reversals of expectation in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The first expectation is that the Prodigal will not be accepted back into the household even as a servant. This would be in keeping with Jewish law, under which the younger son, by his acceptance of work as a swineherd, has become not only a non-Jew but a non-person. Because of this the father would probably not even be expected to answer the son's knock on the door.

But that expectation is reversed in two ways. Not only does the father accept the boy back and does so, lo and behold! as a son, he also, upon seeing the boy "yet at a distance...had compassion, and ran" to greet him (Luke 15:20). To run was "a most unusual and undignified procedure for an aged oriental, even though he is in such haste."⁹³

A second reversal of expectation can be seen in the encounter between the older son and the father. A first century Jew would likely have sided with the older son's complaints, expecting at least an apology from the father for his unusual action toward the Prodigal, along with, perhaps, a promise to treat the older son better in the future. That expectation is not realized, however, as the father not only seems to treat the complaints lightly with the words "you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31), but he also justifies to the older son his lavish treatment of the Prodigal upon his return.

⁹³ Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, 130.

The first century Jew lived in a law-bound world, in which acceptance by God was dependent on adherence to the teachings of Torah. God's love was earned by following the law; a relationship with God was based on merit. The Parable of the Prodigal Son shatters that world when it portrays the forgiveness and acceptance back into the family of a person who had lived if not an immoral at least an amoral life, flaunting the law. Replacement of the merit system by one of love, forgiveness, and acceptance that are able to see and reach beyond what one has done and what one therefore deserves, in order to restore a broken relationship, says that the relationship is the most important thing, not earning, or meriting, or in some way deserving the relationship. In terms of first century Judaism that is a concept which shatters one's personal religious world.

This parable gives rise to some questions which its hearers cannot escape. In confronting them we are drawn into it as thought participants. One question is, "If the way the Prodigal is loved by his father is indicative of the way we are loved as God's children, how should we, then, treat one another? Will our relationships with each other be as the father to the son (both younger and older), or as the older brother to the younger?" A second question hinges on the assertion that we can all see ourselves as participants in the parable in the role of the Prodigal, as receivers of forgiveness. Can we also see ourselves as one of the other two characters? If so, which one of them are we — the older son (I suspect we can see ourselves as the older son in his feelings of being wronged by the father, but can we also see ourselves as

the complainer, the whiner, the indignant, the self-righteous?), the father (the yearning, waiting, watching, forgiving father), or both?

No matter how we answer the above questions we are caught up in the events of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, because there is in it "something about the universe and our experience in it which matches the behavior of a loving father."⁹⁴ We can respond "Indeed! we have all known and received from God the same forgiving, reconciling love the Prodigal knows and receives from his father."

The Parable of the Prodigal Son has some rich new understandings for human existence. There is first an important lesson about what we might call the essence of life. Through his memory of better days at home and the knowledge that even his father's servants are better off than he, the Prodigal discovers "afresh the great truth that life is personal. Without personalness it is a counterfeit, a harsh mockery."⁹⁵ He also comes to know that he can be a person "only through the re-establishment of broken relationships, through becoming aware, to begin with, of his guilt and the measure of his responsibility for his own dereliction."⁹⁶ This means that personalness is at the heart of both self- and other-relatedness.

A second understanding is that repentance on the part of the "sinner" is the mark of "a new beginning" in relationships with other

⁹⁴ Ian Ramsey, Models and Mystery (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 13-14, quoted in TeSelle, 44.

⁹⁵ Jones, 190.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

persons. This repentance is "the capacity to forego pride and accept graciousness."⁹⁷ Such repentance should be met with goodness, grace, boundless mercy, and abounding love, which is how God meets us in our repentance.⁹⁸

Finally, we see that forgiveness and acceptance are qualities that are to be extended not only to sinners, but also to the self-righteous, such as the older brother, for they, too, have misunderstood what love is all about, feeling it must be earned rather than being accepted as freely as it is given.

There are two decisions called for in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. One deals with my willingness to be as repentant as the Prodigal, even to the point of willingness to be less than I formerly was in order to restore a broken relationship. The other concerns my behavior toward outcasts and sinners -- accepting or rejecting?

The lessons for human relationships in this parable are many. First, only through fellowship, or relationship "can we be real persons"⁹⁹ Second, within relationship love knows no bounds. That is how God deals with us, and "what I do represents God's nature and will."¹⁰⁰

A third thing to be said is that human relationship has about it a redemptive, forgiving nature, and honest repentance must be met with

⁹⁷Via, 171.

⁹⁸Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, 131.

⁹⁹Jones, 190.

¹⁰⁰Jeremias, Rediscovering the Parables, 104.

love, acceptance, and reconciliation so that estrangement, however caused, can be overcome. Human relationship, as seen in the Prodigal and his father, always seeks restoration.

A New Testament Parabolic Understanding of Relationship.

Having examined these five parables from a relational perspective, we must now seek to develop a definition of human relationship as found in them. In doing this it must be said at the outset that this relationship between persons is based upon the relationship God has, or desires to have, with us. God figures dominantly in each of the parables, not in an allegorical way but in the sense of "this story shows how God deals with us." It can be seen in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, where the gracious, generous action of the vineyard owner toward the workers is like that of God toward us, or in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, where the father welcomes his wayward son home in the same manner God receives a repentant sinner back into the divine-human fellowship. Thus, the first thing to be said about human relationships is that they are to be, inasmuch as possible, modeled on the divine-human relationship.

Within that structure there are a number of characteristics of human relationship which can be seen in the parables examined above. The most predominant of these is love, the love meant by the New Testament writers through their use of the Greek word, agape. Agape is a love that can be defined as an active concern for the well being of another person, motivated not by their inherent goodness or worth, not because they have earned it, but simply because they are a person and we love them for the

sake of loving them. It is a love based not upon feeling, or emotion, but upon an intentional goodwill for them. Agape is the love with which God loves us, and it is through our loving other persons with agape that we show our love for God.

In that agape love we then recognize a number of things about other persons which add to the character or substance of our relationships with them. Included in that number is our equality before God, our commonality or oneness as sisters and brothers in God's sight. This should, and must if our relationships are to be what God expects of us, lead us to the practice of self-sacrificing love for others. Also found in the agape love is the willingness to be governed by the other person's need. This means that I am willing to act toward another person on the basis of what he-she needs, not on what I believe he-she needs or what I want to give them or do for them.

Another aspect of the unique kind of love that is agape is its boundless nature. Agape knows no limits, which means that there is no need in the other person's life that is beyond my care and concern, and that there is no limit to my attempt to fulfill whatever need(s) I perceive in their life. This is not to say that I have the ability to fulfill every need I find in another person, but that every need he-she has falls within the scope of my love and concern for him-her.

Other elements of human relationship found in the parables include a deep and abiding personalness, what Martin Buber called the "I-Thou." This personalness, the recognition of others as persons rather than as objects is a constant theme of the parables, and is seen in the compassionate treatment of the two sons by the father in the Parable of

the Prodigal Son, and by the actions of the Samaritan "non-person" toward the beaten Jew in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This personal, compassionate nature of human relationship grows directly out of the agape love discussed above. One cannot truly love an object, one can only love persons.

In that personal, I-Thou character of human relationship we are led to openness toward other persons, an openness that is both accepting and forgiving. In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector we hear a call to be accepting, to receive other persons into the human fellowship even though they may be as different from us as night is from day, going so far as to receive even the lowliest of sinners. If, after all, this is how God treats us, how can we treat each other any differently?

This acceptance implies forgiveness. In his-her acceptance of us God forgives us graciously and generously. This is a thrust of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. But we also see in that parable a corollary of that thrust — those forgiven are to be forgiving. Thus to be in genuine relationship with other persons demands of us that we be forgiving toward them as occasion requires. Even as God's grace is available to all, so our love must not be withheld from those with whom we are in relationship.

There are, perhaps, many other things that could be said here about human relationship as seen in the parables. But surely the foundations of the parabolic understanding of human relationship are that it begins with agape love that makes us brothers and sisters of one another, equals before God, a love that is oriented toward others and

their needs, boundless in nature and action. In that love, human relationship is a deeply personal thing, characterized by openness, acceptance, and forgiveness.

If these few simple, yet profound characteristics of human relationship are built into the relationships we share with others, and if they are reinforced throughout the life of the relationship, we will discover the realness, the vitality of life and continually be growing persons. It is that personal growth that each of us needs and seeks in life, and which the workshop proposed here seeks to help engaged and newly wed couples work toward in their relationship with each other.

Chapter 3

A THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

A Definition of Marriage.

Marriage, the human relationship with which we are concerned here, can be defined in a number of ways. It is likely that the number of definitions of marriage given will be equal (or nearly so) to the number of persons asked. These definitions would undoubtedly have similarities, and might even have the same basic description, but they would almost surely have, in addition, different expansions upon that basic theme. What is proposed here is not a complete or definitive definition of marriage, for I am not at all certain that any such understanding can be found. Rather, the intention is to put forth an understanding of the marriage relationship which incorporates much of what has been said and accepted for thousands of years, but which is also informed and, I believe, enhanced by some thinking of recent years.

In that sense, we can begin by saying that marriage is a monogamous relationship in which one man and one woman commit themselves to each other in love, in trust, and in support, for the mutual fulfillment of needs. It is "a union of two people in body, mind, and spirit,"¹ which means that marriage is a whole person relationship in which everything a person is must come to bear upon the relationship in order for it to work, to be successful, to be all that it can be. Marriage thus

¹James R. Hine, Grounds for Marriage (Danville, Il: Interstate, 1971), 39.

becomes the most intimate of all human relationships, beginning in "the 'one-flesh' union established in a sexual relationship,"² but goes far beyond that to include every aspect of being human in relationship with another human person. This understanding of marriage is based on the biblical concept of "henosis," or "one-flesh," which is "an organic union involving the total selves."³

To speak of marriage as "henosis" is to say that it is, for Christians, one of the orders of creation, a part of God's intention for the earth's peoples. Karl Barth makes a strong case for this view.

The man-woman relation is, indeed, for Barth an important aspect of man's created nature. For man has been made not for existence as an isolated individual, but for what Barth calls "coexistence." He is human only in fellow-community.... And of this life in coexistence or fellow-humanity, the man-woman relation is the prototype.⁴

Barth himself says:

When marriage is seen in the light of the divine command, it is surely evident that the decision for the way of marriage is for some, as the choice of the unmarried state for others, the matter of a supremely particular divine vocation.

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A man enters and remains in the married state because he recognizes that this is the divine will for him, and therefore obligatory.⁵

Whether or not one agrees with Barth that marriage is obligatory, the historic Judeo-Christian view is that living together in marriage is, in God's plan, normative for men and women. In Old Testament times a young

²Charles William Stewart, The Minister as Marriage Counselor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961, 1970), 204.

³Ibid., 205.

⁴Karl Barth, On Marriage (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), iii. From "Introduction" by Franklin Sherman.

⁵Ibid., 1, italics added.

man was expected to marry, and while the available evidence seems to indicate that Jesus did not himself marry, he did affirm the teaching of Judaism that marriage is an order of creation. In an encounter with the Pharisees over the question of divorce, Jesus

answered, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19:4-6)

The closing words of Jesus in that passage, "What therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder," add to the understanding the element of marriage being a life-long relationship. It must be seen as life-long in the sense that as long as both partners in the marriage are alive they shall be married to one another. The death of one does not preclude the remaining partner from remarrying. Where the question of divorce fits into this understanding of marriage (if it fits in at all, as some might want to say) is that at the time the marriage is begun the question of divorce ought not be raised at all; rather, each partner, man and woman, must commit themselves to doing whatever they see is necessary and within their power to make the marriage a lasting, life-long relationship. If there is not that intention and commitment, the difficulties of marriage may seem greater than its joys, and the possibility of its being truly a life-long relationship greatly diminished.

In this God-intended, one-flesh, monogamous, life-long relationship of mutual commitment, a man and a woman come together for "sexual union; intimacy or the creation of an I-Thou relationship; and

companionship, or the working out of the male-female roles over a protracted period of time."⁶ In this marriage has been, or has at least had the potential for being, a relationship in which one person's needs are fulfilled by another as husbands and wives live together in a mutually enriching way. This is what we might call a "traditional" definition or understanding of marriage.

To that understanding I would add two statements from perspectives that have become increasingly important aspects of the contemporary scene, both "religious" and "secular." Made in separate books by a husband and wife they add important understandings to marriage and its definition. The first says,

Here is what I mean by a "good marriage" (or a "good family"): A marriage (or family) in which all those involved have maximum opportunity, through mutual need-satisfaction, to grow toward the fulfillment of their God-intended potentialities as persons.⁷

The key phrase in that statement is "grow toward the fulfillment of their God-intended potentialities as persons." I believe there is within each person a need for continual personal growth, a need which must be fulfilled or we stagnate, even die in the inner self. One of the most important stimuli to that growth is our relationships with others. If the most intimate of all human relationships, marriage, is not growth-producing, then it fails to achieve one of its most important, most crucial roles in the life of two persons joined together in marriage.

⁶Stewart, 206.

⁷Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 97.

The second statement concerns "liberated marriage." Its author says that a liberated marriage is

...a relationship in which two people who like each other, who love each other, who are able to have fun together, and to share the transcendent moments of life together, make a conscious commitment to each other and their own growth. They must be able to accept each other's individuality and separateness, to rejoice in each other's achievements as well as in their own, to care for each other's needs as one way of meeting their own, to enjoy sex both deeply and playfully, to enjoy being and becoming human together.⁸

This statement, I believe, stands alone.

Marriage and the Parabolic Definition of Relationship.

What are the implications of the parabolic understanding of human relationship, developed in chapter two, for marriage as it has been defined above? We can say, at the outset, that love is paramount to both. Human relationship as seen in the parables must be founded upon and guided by love, and so it is with marriage. Although the love spoken of in the parables is defined as agape, and the love which brings a man and a woman together in marriage is eros, or erotic love, the two need not be mutually exclusive. This is said in the sense that eros does not have to be the "selfish" love it is so often portrayed as being, a love which seeks only the satisfaction of one's sexual needs ("sexual" seen in a broad sense, and not simply the physical act of sexual intercourse).

There is no need to minimize or deprecate the "selfish" element, the eros in love. If love has any meaning at all, the beloved must be allowed an objective value by reason of which she [or he] is sought, and possession of her [or him] is desired....Eros therefore is always

⁸Charlotte Holt Clinebell, Meet Me in the Middle (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 50.

an indication of the beloved's value, though it is not always the true measure of that value.⁹

In this way eros can be a true giving of oneself to another, much as agape is an other-directed, self-giving love. Thus, from the very beginning there are important implications of our parabolic understanding of human relationship for marriage.

Another implication is found in the intimacy of marriage and the personalness of human relationship. One cannot be intimately related to an object, an inanimate entity, for intimacy is an I-Thou, not an I-It relationship. In marriage "God has given me a human being, not merely someone who performs the function of a human being,"¹⁰ which means that I must relate to that person as a person. It means that marriage is more than just a contract for living together, more than a convenient way for two persons to meet the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and sex. Marriage is the intermingling of the personalness, the personhood, the personality of a woman and a man, an I-Thou relationship in which those basic needs and much more are fulfilled.

But if that personalness, the intimacy which characterizes marriage, is to be full and complete, the other elements of our parabolic definition of relationship must also come into play. For example, personalness, intimacy, implies an equality in marriage, which does away with the old marital structure which saw the husband as "president of the

⁹ Derrick Sherwin Bailey, The Mystery of Love and Marriage (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), 25.

¹⁰ Helmut Thielicke, How the World Began (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 95, quoted in Gangsei, 38.

corporation": and the wife as merely "one of the employees." If human relationship as seen in the parables includes the equality of all persons before God, marriage, the most intimate human relationship we know and enjoy, must be a union of equals. Fortunately, we seem to be moving toward that understanding of marriage more and more today, even though it seems, to some, at a snail's pace.

Again, the element of compassion set forth by the parables must be a part of marriage. An important aspect of marriage is mutual need fulfillment, and that requires a compassion which sensitizes us to the other person's needs, and which motivates us to do whatever is within our power to meet those needs. It is this quality of life that enables us to be not just sympathetic toward another person but to be empathetic, to have not only concern for them because of the life pain they are experiencing, but to act toward them as if we, too, were experiencing the same pain. Husbands and wives who are unable to be compassionate toward one another will find it difficult to speak to the deeper needs the other person has in his-her life.

It is this compassion toward one's marriage partner that enables a person to be accepting and forgiving in the relationship. When two persons marry, a new relationship or union is formed. Unfortunately it is not two new persons who form it. Rather, we all bring with us into marriage all the bumps and warts we have been forming from the time of our birth, the habits, thought and action patterns, idiosyncracies, likes and dislikes, etc., that make us who we are. And unless the couple has been living together "without benefit of clergy" (as more and more couples who come to the Church to be married have been), they know

altogether too few of those bumps and warts on their marriage partner. What a frustration it must be for the bride who neatly squeezes the toothpaste tube from the bottom to find that her husband not only squeezes it in the middle but seemingly refuses to change his ways. If she cannot be accepting and/or forgiving in this relatively minor matter, rough times lie ahead. Not only is it likely that a mountain will be made out of this molehill, but she may find it even more difficult, perhaps nearly impossible, to deal with bumps and warts of a major nature. (Let it be very clearly understood that what is said here of the new bride can also be said of the new groom!)

Acceptance and forgiveness in the marriage relationship are vitally necessary if it is to be a growth-inducing relationship. My personal experience and witness in this area is that I am much more likely to work at changing, to be open to growth, if there is acceptance and forgiveness of me coupled with the identification of a bump or wart on me by my spouse.

Working Toward Achievement of the Parabolic Relationship in Marriage.

There are many important implications of the parabolic understanding of human relationship for all the areas of marriage. But how can couples work toward seeing them, and even more important, achieving this biblical understanding in their marriage? A part of the thesis of this paper is that most couples need to be helped in this by being made aware of what qualities of life are involved in human relationship, and what are some of the dynamics of relationship that will, hopefully, help those qualities become determinative factors in

the relationship, as well as assisted in the acquisition of skills in those dynamics. It has been my observation that many of the engaged couples with whom I "counsel" prior to their marriage are very confident when they talk about meeting the physical needs of each other, but seem much less sure when we explore needs of a psychological, emotional, or spiritual nature. My contention is that by presenting to engaged and/or newly wed couples in a group setting the parabolic understanding of human relationship and its implications for marriage, and then exploring some of the relational dynamics that I believe are of great importance, couples will be given some tools they need to make their marriage a growing, liberating, fulfilling relationship.

Chapter 4

THE WORKSHOP DESIGN

Why a Workshop Approach?

As stated in the introduction, it is often difficult for pastors to give as much time as they might wish to premarital preparation. One way to more effectively utilize pastoral time for this important ministry would be to do premarital and/or newly wed training with a group of couples. This chapter will present a design for such a workshop, which will seek to acquaint couples with the parabolic understanding of human relationship and its implications for marriage, and to assist them in an exploration of some of the dynamics of the marriage relationship that are, from the author's experience in marriage counseling, important in building and maintaining a growth-inducing marriage, and assist them in working toward the parabolic definition of relationship in their marriage.

The workshop approach to premarital and/or newly wed training is proposed for reasons already suggested. One is that it seems to be a more practical, effective use of a pastor's time in working with engaged and newly wed couples. In these days of multiple demands upon a clergy-person's schedule every effort must be made to utilize time in the most productive way. A workshop approach to premarital preparation is, I believe, a move in that direction.

A second reason for the workshop approach is the added dimension of group discussion of the areas to be covered. I believe that we are not meant to live in isolation from other persons. Men and women are social creatures, meant to relate to other persons. One of the values of this relational dimension of life is the testing of our own ideas, values, etc., in dialogue with others. Another value is the adding of new ideas and dimensions of life as we hear what other persons have to say to us. This can take place on a couple level as well as an individual level. It is a part of my thesis that one of the most effective ways for a couple to learn about and prepare for marriage is to discuss it with other couples. As they share their perspectives about many things in marriage, important understandings can take place in all their marriage relationships. A workshop approach to premarital and/or newly wed training can provide this opportunity.

Beyond this, however, is the growth impetus of participation in a small group. The experience of fellowship in a growth group setting provides a significant influence in personal growth as persons come to a deeper understanding of themselves and of others. This understanding is an important element in relationships with other persons, particularly one's spouse. The relational workshop approach to premarital preparation seeks to provide a setting where that understanding can begin to take place and/or be reinforced for the participants, as well as to introduce and explore some of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, especially marriage. This is done with the goal of helping marriages become growth experiences.

The Workshop Goals.

The goals of such a workshop can be seen from two perspectives, that of the pastor or other leader, and that of the participants. Specific goals for the pastor would include exposing couples to a biblical understanding of human relationship and its implications for marriage; equipping persons with skills in relational dynamics, and becoming a facilitating force in their growth as individuals and as couples; establishing a deeper relationship with couples he-she joins in marriage, which will hopefully make the marriage ceremony more meaningful for them, as well as provide a basis for a continuing relationship in which the pastor becomes a resource upon which the couples may draw in times of trouble or at points along the continuum of the "life crisis cycle." Other specific goals for the pastor will be discovered and developed by different persons as they utilize the workshop approach to premarital and/or newly wed training.

Specific goals for the couples who participate in such a workshop might include broadening the base of experiences from which they enter marriage; to discover their potential assets for building a successful marriage; opportunity both to share their own ideas, hopes, and goals relating to marriage, and to resolve (or begin working toward such resolution) their questions, doubts, fears, or hesitancies about marriage as others share with them their ideas, hopes, and goals; a deepening of their couple relationship; experiencing growth within themselves as individuals; and getting to know the pastor better.

Conducting the Workshop.

Leadership. Leadership of the workshop proposed in this paper should not be attempted unless a person has had some training in group dynamics and group facilitation, or has had extensive experience as a participant in group activities. This is not because there is some kind of mystique to group leadership, but because in any group there are a number of dynamics occurring simultaneously throughout the group's life and in each meeting of the group, and the leader or facilitator must be sensitive to them, be able to recognize them as they occur, and be able to channel them in a way that will most benefit the members of the group. Most persons who are loving, open human beings, who are in touch with their own feelings, and who are non-manipulative persons who can listen to others¹ make good group leader-facilitators. Training in group work is usually available to persons who live near a college, and at reasonable cost. Sometimes it can be obtained in an adult education program. Such training should be accompanied by participation in a personal growth group led by an experienced facilitator. Finally, it is a good idea to co-lead a group with an experienced facilitator before striking out on one's own.

If training is not readily available one can still prepare for group work. This can be done through a process of participation in a growth group and extensive reading in the field, along with co-leading a group (co-leading a group is essential in this instance). While this is

¹Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Growth Groups (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 54-55.

not as suitable as taking a course in group dynamics and leadership, it can give a person some basis for his-her facilitation of the group process. Three excellent books in this field are (full information in the bibliography): Growth Groups by Howard Clinebell; Sharing Groups in the Church by Robert Leslie; and Groups Alive -- Church Alive by Clyde Reid.

Working with another person, preferably of the opposite sex, as co-leader is an excellent idea. In this workshop a pastor-spouse co-leadership would be ideal. This will provide opportunities for group participants' growth in relationship to authority figures of both sexes. It will also provide an example of husband-wife interaction as the spouse co-leaders participate in the group workshop activities along with the engaged and newly wed couples. In such a situation it would be good for both to have had training in group leadership, but if only one has had that opportunity the training can be shared by the spouse as a means of preparation. Co-leadership can greatly enhance a group's life as the two styles of leadership contrast with one another; it provides continuity if one leader cannot be present at a session; the give-and-take sharing of the co-leaders presents different ways of viewing and understanding the material at hand; and co-leadership is a stimulus to leader growth as each gives feedback to the other. Co-leaders must have good communication between them, be open and honest with each other, and feel comfortable sharing feelings and disagreements in the group's presence.

Workshop Format. Two settings come to mind for the workshop. The first is a weekly meeting over the course of five weeks. At each

weekly meeting one session of the workshop design would be conducted. Advantages of this setting are that participants would have a week between sessions to practice and/or discuss at greater length the skills/topics dealt with in each session, and that they could read material from the book table dealing either with the session just completed or the session coming up. Although having the workshop spread out over a five week period may seem to be something of a disadvantage, it really is not. My experience is that if I am convinced of the importance of a program, and share that conviction with potential participants, they are usually more than happy to take part. Also, most engaged couples are eager to learn about things which can help their coming marriage be a satisfying, enriching, and meaningful relationship, so that the five week length should not be a problem for them.

The second possible setting is a weekend retreat in which all five sessions are conducted within a short span of time. This retreat could take place at a church, either the church served by the pastor or a neighboring church (the latter might be preferable), or at a church camp. One time span could be from Friday night to Saturday night, with Session One conducted on Friday night, Session Two on Saturday morning, Sessions Three and Four on Saturday afternoon, and Session Five Saturday night. This scheduling would work well if the retreat workshop were at a church since it would not have to work around traditional Sunday morning church activities. Its major disadvantage is the intensity of the schedule, giving it almost a marathon flavor.

A Friday night through Sunday noon schedule would work very well at a church camp. In this setting one session each could be done on

Friday night, Saturday morning, afternoon, and evening, and Sunday morning. This would allow for free time as couples, for browsing through books, and an opportunity for some reflection on each session's experience.

The advantages of a retreat setting are the shorter time it takes to complete the workshop -- twenty-four to thirty-six hours as opposed to five weeks -- and the possibility of seeing more readily and closely the interrelatedness of the five sessions. The only disadvantage, which is a minor one, is that less time is available for reflection, discussion, and practice between sessions.

A helpful complement to the workshop experience would be one or two follow-up sessions in which couples could share their progress at building a satisfying, fulfilling marriage relationship. Such sessions could be scheduled at six and twelve months after the workshop, and take the form of an informal sharing group. A very flexible agenda might include discussion of such questions as: In what areas of your marriage do you feel an increasing strength? How has the workshop helped you in this? What areas of your relationship need strengthening, and what steps are you taking to provide that strengthening? How is marriage meeting or failing to meet your expectations? In such follow-up sessions a high priority should be given to opportunity for couples to raise their own questions and issues.

Participation. The participants in the workshop will be engaged and/or newly wed couples (married less than two years). One reason for including both engaged and newly wed couples in the workshop rather than

only pre-marrieds is that engaged couples often come to marriage with an idealism that is not easily translated into reality, and that idealism may be tempered and/or altered by the experience of the newly wed couples. Another reason is that a year or two of marriage may have a way of dulling the joy and vitality of the relationship, and the freshness and excitement which engaged couples bring to marriage may have a renewing influence upon newly weds experiencing such dulled feelings about their marriage.

If the above reasons are also seen as advantages of mixing engaged and newly wed couples in the workshop, a disadvantage would be that pre-marrieds and newly weds will likely come with different concerns, questions, and expectations, and one group might lose interest while the issues of the other are dealt with. This could become a problem in sustaining interest and commitment on the part of all participants. In the event this should happen it would be wise to allow the possibility of engaged and newly wed couples to meet separately to deal with issues of concern to them. On balance, however, it seems to me that mixing pre-marrieds and newly weds in the same group is a good idea and should be attempted.

As the pastor talks with couples about the workshop he-she should, in addition to encouraging them to attend, make it clear that they will be expected to attend all five sessions or the full retreat and participate fully in the activities. During the course of the workshop it will be important for the leader(s) to be aware of and sensitive to persons who do not participate fully, especially in the group debriefing and discussions, and seek to draw them into the group activities.

Frequency of the Workshop. A workshop of this length can probably be offered no more than two or three times a year. Church program schedules and pastors' personal schedules will most likely preclude it being conducted any more frequently, especially if the workshop is held in a weekly meeting setting. If the weekend retreat setting is used it might possibly be held quarterly. I am beginning to have more and more couples contact me several months in advance of their wedding date, so that a workshop held every three to six months could expect to have as participants most of the couples married in a small to medium sized congregation.

Publicity. Publicity is often as important to the success of an event as the event itself. Adequate time and careful consideration of the wording of publicity should be a part of announcing and publicizing the workshop, emphasizing the growth-centered nature of the workshop. Announcements in the church bulletin and newsletter should appear at least six weeks in advance of the workshop date. In smaller churches, where weddings may be held less often than in larger churches, it might be advisable, even necessary, to contact neighboring congregations, inviting, with that pastor's approval, couples who may be interested in this type of experience. If a college or university is located nearby, the campus minister may be a source for discovering potential participants. In every instance where participant couples are from other churches, the workshop leader should contact the pastor of that church, giving him-her a workshop outline, and assuring him-her that the workshop

leader is not attempting to usurp any prerogatives or undermine any relationship of that pastor and couple.

A sample announcement of the workshop will be found in Appendix A.

The Workshop Design.

The workshop suggested here has five sessions of one-and-one-half to two hours each. The sessions will deal with the following topics:

1. Exploring the intrapersonal, or self- relationship. It is my contention that we cannot enjoy healthy relationships with others unless we have a healthy relationship with ourselves. Loving others begins by loving ourselves, and this opening session seeks to help participants see the good in themselves and to affirm that goodness within them. It will also introduce the parabolic understanding of human relationship and its implications for marriage. This introduction will be in two parts. The first will be a brief presentation, or mini-lecture, by the pastor which quickly summarizes the five parables and what they teach about human relationships. The second and most important part of the introduction will involve the couples in a "parabbling" exercise in which they will be asked either to rephrase or rewrite one of the five parables, or to write their own parable, in either case trying to make the parable speak to their relationship as a married couple.

2. Communication and conflict resolution are, based on my experience in marriage counseling, areas of major weakness in many marriages. Too often mates do not know how to communicate effectively, and are therefore not equipped to resolve many of the conflicts which

arise in their marriage. The second session will address the art of communication and conflict resolution.

3. The third session deals with trust as a dynamic of human relationship. Lack of trust in a marriage is often related to a lack of communication. Sometimes persons simply do not know how to open themselves to trusting someone else. In this session what trust is and how persons can work toward a fuller realization of it in interpersonal relationships will be explored.

4. Since marriage is a relationship of henosis, or "one flesh," sex plays a very important role in it. In today's world most couples come to marriage with a good knowledge, and often with experience, in the physiology of sex. What is often needed is a greater understanding of human sexuality. This session will deal with our sexuality as human beings, with reference to physiology as needed.

5. The final session will deal with the spiritual dimensions of marriage, along with a discussion of the marriage ceremony and its meanings.

Before looking at the workshop design there are two things I wish to suggest. The first is that, because many weddings in the Church are for non-church related persons, a "get acquainted" session for pastor and individual couples may be advisable. Ideally it would help to establish a rapport between the couple and the pastor that will help the former feel comfortable working with the pastor and the group. During such a session the goals and a brief outline of the workshop could be presented. A possible outline for such a session is found in Appendix B.

The second thing is a book table for the workshop. There are a number of books which have been published over the past several years that are very helpful in understanding the marriage relationship and many of its dynamics. A book table containing both the topics to be considered in the workshop and other areas not considered should be present at each session. Couples should be encouraged to take, read, and discuss together as many books as they wish. Time could be included in each session to share insights and/or discuss questions arising from this reading. Possible books for such a table can be found in the bibliography, but should not be limited to those choices.

A suggested format for the workshop sessions is:

1. A brief presentation by the workshop leader introducing the area or dynamic of the marriage relationship to be considered. This could include a concise definition of communication, for example, and its importance in marriage. A short statement about the effects of good and poor communication on a marriage might be made. A brief word about procedure for the session should also be a part of this introduction. The introduction should be as brief as possible. Its purpose is simply to open the area of consideration for the session. Maximum time should be given to group learning through skill exercises, audio-visuals, discussion, etc.

2. The heart of each session is the activity or activities to be used in an exploration of the particular dynamic of relationship under consideration. These will include fantasy, skill building exercises, audio-visuals, written instruments, discussion, and any other thing which

the facilitator thinks will be helpful. Ideally, a minimum of one hour should be devoted to this part of each session.

3. Every session should conclude with a period of evaluation by the participants. This is necessary to help determine the effectiveness of each session and to consider adjustments to the workshop content in order to make it as helpful as possible. This evaluation will be done through the use of a written instrument which can be found in Appendix C.

Session One -- "Getting to Know Me"

Note: In Session One the introductory statement will be longer than in the following sessions. This is because it must include a presentation of the parabolic understanding of human relationship and its implications for marriage, in addition to remarks to set the stage for the awareness exercises which are the main focus of the session. Since the parabolic understanding of relationship is to be the basis for the workshop it is vital that the participants be introduced to it at the very beginning of the workshop itself.

This introduction, and the others to follow, should not be seen as a "script" to be followed to the letter. Rather, it is one possible way of starting the session.

I. Introduction.

I want to welcome you to an experience that I hope will be both interesting and exciting for all of us. Marriage is, in spite of all the problems and turmoils most people experience in it, one of the most rewarding and personally fulfilling relationships we enter into. I know that you are looking forward to your married years, and it's my hope and

goal that this workshop will be helpful in your realizing your marriage hopes and dreams.

Let's begin by getting acquainted. To do that I'd like each person to tell us his or her name and two other things. I'd like each man to tell us how long he and his fiancée or wife have been engaged or married, and each woman to tell us their wedding date. Then I'd like every person to share with us something about their name. It can be in terms of its origin, its meaning, whether you like it, or anything you'd like to share. (As this get acquainted exercise begins it might be helpful for the leader to model for the group by going first. Of course, any kind of getting acquainted exercise may be used here.)

Thank you for your sharing. I'm sure that as we go through the workshop we'll get to know each other in a number of ways.

In this first session we'll be doing a number of things. One is to look briefly at a definition of human relationship gleaned from five of Jesus' parables, and see something of its implications for marriage. We'll spend a few minutes talking about and setting some goals for our time together. Finally, we'll do some things to help us get more in touch with ourselves, to help us become more aware of who we are, because it's in a deeper knowledge of ourselves that better self-relationships are to be found, and the better relationship we have with ourselves the better relationship we can have with others.

The parables of Jesus are of great importance to the Church for several reasons. One is that they present some new understandings of human existence, and in those we find some significant things being said

about human relationship. This is especially true in five of the parables, which we will look at.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector shows a very pious, highly respected Pharisee praying alongside a Tax Collector, considered by the community to be the lowest of sinners. In the story the Pharisee obviously thinks himself far superior to the other man. But contrary to what the first hearers must have expected, it is the Tax Collector who is, in the end, justified by God, not the Pharisee. This story tells us that there is in God's sight an equality among persons, and that there must be the same equality in our sight. It is not, however, an equality based on physical, emotional, or even spiritual characteristics. Rather, it is an equality based on our inherent worth as persons, and it gives us a commonality, or oneness as brothers and sisters of each other. It is this quality of life and relationship which leads us to be accepting and forgiving toward one another.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' better known stories, told in response to the question of who is the neighbor one is supposed to love as oneself. In it a beaten and robbed Jew has his needs ignored by two Jewish clergypersons, while a Samaritan, a hated enemy of the Jews, stops and rescues the half-dead man, even providing care for him at the inn. Jesus then tells the questioner, a lawyer, that he, too, must treat even his enemy as his neighbor, following the Samaritan's lead. In this parable we find insights into human relationship concerning our response to human need, a response which must be made in whatever way is appropriate to the situation, and which must be offered to whomever we find in need of assistance. We relate to others

meaningfully as we seek to satisfy the needs we discover in their lives. This parable also says that self-sacrificing love is the highest value in God's sight, and therefore must be in ours.

The Parable of the Vineyard Workers concerns a man who hired field hands throughout the day, some at the beginning of the work day, others at later hours, even hiring some with only one hour before quitting time. He promised the first hired a specific wage, but said to the others only that he would pay what was right. At the end of the day each and every worker is paid exactly the same wage, regardless of how much or how little they had worked. The parable teaches us that with God, and so it should be in genuine human relationship, reward, even love, is not always in direct proportion to achievement or deserving, but is based on the giver's (or lover's) graciousness and generosity. This adds to relationship a security that is not necessarily of our own doing, but which results simply from one person relating to another.

In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant we see a man who owes his king a sum of money that is, in terms of the time, incalculable. When the servant asks for more time to pay the debt, the king, with great benevolence, wipes it from the books. Shortly after that the servant sees a man who owes him what is by comparison a paltry sum and demands it be repaid. When the second servant asks for more time, the first orders him and his family thrown into prison. When the king hears of this he rescinds his forgiveness of the huge debt and has the unmerciful servant thrown into prison. This story has a word for us about the danger of claiming our rights while denying others their rights. It also says that to live in relationship with others requires us to wipe clean the slate

when necessary, for we have need of similar cleansing in our own lives from time to time.

Finally, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, another well-known story, is about a man who divides his estate between his two sons, the younger of whom converts his share to cash and goes abroad where he squanders it. Falling on hard times he takes the lowest possible kind of work. In his despondency he comes to his senses, and determines to go home, asking to be taken on as a servant. But, lo and behold! his father receives him home as the son he is. This causes the older brother to complain, whereupon the father tries to explain that while he does love the first son, he also loves the second, and when a person who is thought to be dead returns alive it is cause to rejoice in love. This rich story tells us that personalness is the essence of life -- life is personal; if not it is a sham. We also see that repentance, a "turn around" by another person, is their reaffirmation of the personal nature of relationship, and must be met by goodness, grace, mercy, and love from us. There is also a word here about extending such forgiveness not only to the "sinner" but also to the self-righteous, who so often misunderstand what life and love are all about.

In these parables, then, we see that human relationship is to be characterized, first of all, by love, understood not so much in the romantic sense, although that must certainly be a part of marriage, as much as in the sense of an active concern for the well-being of other persons. We can see that love in all five stories. It is a love that manifests itself in an intentional good-will for another human being. When we begin from this point, then the other things mentioned begin

naturally to flow — equality, commonality or oneness, self-giving, personalness or the I-Thou relationship, openness, acceptance, and forgiveness.

As we think about these relational qualities I think we can readily see their implications for marriage, the most intimate relationship we know. Marriage is a relationship based upon a love in which a man and a woman give themselves to each other for caring, for comfort, and for growth. It demands of us that we be accepting, forgiving, open, and very personal. Marriage requires a compassion that sensitizes us to our partner's needs, and that motivates us to fulfill or satisfy them. If we are aware of the need for these elements in our marriage, and are committed to working toward their realization, we will find in marriage the personalness, the personhood we all need and are able to attain.

It is my hope and goal that what we do in this workshop will help each of you to begin and/or continue to grow toward that kind of relationship in your marriage. The starting point of what we do here is the parabolic understanding of human relationship and its implications for marriage. The way we'll work at achieving that growth and try to provide for its continuance will be to examine, discuss, and in some cases practice some of the dynamics of marriage, dynamics which are important to be aware of and to keep operative in our relationships as husbands and wives.

To get a bit deeper into our starting point and get us more personally involved in it, I want to suggest that we spend a few minutes doing what I call "parabbling." The way that's done is to rewrite one of

the five parables or to write one of your own. As a couple decide on either of those two procedures, and then work together at coming up with a parable that speaks in some way to or about your relationship as a married couple, or to how you anticipate your relationship as a married couple.

(Here the leader should distribute paper and pencils for the couples to do this exercise. Bibles or copies of the five parables should also be available for those couples who decide to rewrite a parable. While it is important for the couples to do this work on their own, the pastor should feel free to be available to help the couples get started. He-she should be very careful, however, not to do more than that.)

Now, let's share our parables with the group. As we do this, remember that there are no "right" or "wrong" results in this exercise, but that what's important is that each of you, as a couple, has produced something that is meaningful to you, and may be helpful to others. (After the couples have shared their parables, and the others have had opportunity to comment, ask the group how they felt about doing this exercise.)

(The qualities of relationship which this paper has found in the parables studies, and any that come out of the couples' parabling should be listed on newsprint and displayed prominently during the workshop. Participants should be encouraged throughout the workshop to ask themselves what exercises, etc. deal with one or more of these qualities. Also, the leader(s) should periodically during the workshop share with the group how he-she-they see a particular exercise doing this. An

example of this is the Intentional Marriage Method, which deals with need satisfaction, and may be related in that to the Parable of the Good Samaritan which speaks of responding to the need of another person. Again, the Parable of the Prodigal Son can be seen to relate to the session on trust, in that the prodigal son trusted in his father's goodness and willingness to accept him rather than turn him away upon his return home.)

Next, let's spend a few minutes talking about our goals. What do you want to happen during our time together? What are some of the things you'd like to strive toward as you prepare for your marriage, or as you seek to strengthen your marriage, that you think we might be able to work on here?

Some of my goals as the leader are: (Here the leader should share with the group his-her goals for the workshop, listing them on newsprint. Some possible goals for the leader are found above in this chapter.)

Now, what are some goals that you have? (Here the leader needs to facilitate the group in setting their goals. It is important to list them on newsprint also, and important not to restate them in such a way that they no longer reflect what was expressed. Any restatement for the purpose of listing must be checked out with the person who offered the goal. The two lists of leader goals and group goals should be prominently displayed during the workshop. The leader must be sensitive to whether the goals are being worked on during the workshop, and be flexible in the use of the design so that as many goals as possible can receive attention during the workshop sessions).

Now, as we move through the workshop let's keep these goals in mind. I'll try to be aware of working on them; you try to be aware of whether or not they are being included. If not, let me know so that we can deal with as many of them as possible.

The first relational dynamic we will work with is called the "intrapersonal" or "self" relationship. We all have a relationship with ourselves. Jesus underlined this when, as the second part of the Great Commandment, he said you must "love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Each of us does love ourself, we care about us, and that loving is an indicator of our self-relationship.

This is an important matter, because how we love or relate to ourselves is a key to how we love or relate to others. Therefore, it is important in exploring human relationship to begin by looking at our relationship with ourselves. And this self-relationship is determined, in large part, by the way we see ourselves -- our self-awareness or self-image -- by discovering who we are and who we have the potential yet to become. It is in that discovery that we become the most natural, the most spontaneous, and that we most drop our defenses, characteristics which are then deepened as we relate to others.² In our naturalness, spontaneity, and vulnerability we find ourselves, and in that finding we have something to give to relationships with other persons.

²The "triad" of naturalness, spontaneity, and dropping of defenses comes from Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper & Row, 1954) 239-240, quoted in Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. Growth Counseling for Marriage Enrichment, Pre-Marriage and the Early Years (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 56.

A person who is not sure of himself [or herself] will find intimacy [defined as "the degree of mutual need-satisfaction in the relationship"] too threatening simply because it requires him [or her] to lose himself [or herself] to some degree in the relationship. As a person becomes more sure of himself [or herself], he [or she] increasingly seeks intimacy in relationships.³

If we would relate in a meaningful way to others, we must relate in a meaningful way to ourselves. And we do that by becoming more aware of who we are, more aware of the good within us, and being more aware of and more in touch with the potential for growth that is in every one of us. To begin doing that we're going to use some exercises which can open our inner doors and set us on the road to personal discovery.

II. Awareness exercises.

A. "Picture Gallery."⁴ (Note: This is a good consciousness raising technique that can get persons in touch with their feelings about themselves as a man or as a woman. Pictures of all kinds cut from magazines and mounted on construction paper are displayed all about the room. Any pictures are suitable -- pictures of people, landscapes, activities, machines, etc. There should be enough pictures so that every person may choose several. Before beginning this exercise divide the workshop into groups of six to eight persons each, smaller if time is limited. Instructions are as follows.)

Now I'd like all of you to take some time wandering around the room, and to choose from the pictures displayed here five or six that put

³Howard J. and Charlotte Clinebell, The Intimate Marriage (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 1, 43.

⁴Charlotte Holt Clinebell, Counseling for Liberation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 73.

you in touch with your feelings about yourself as a woman or as a man. Choose pictures that make you think about your experience as male or female. When you've chosen your pictures, go back to your circle, and when your small group has reassembled, share with each other what the pictures you have selected mean to you.

(Note: After the groups have shared, the leader might ask them to think about whether the pictures each person has chosen have anything to do with his-her feelings about marriage, and then to discuss this in the small groups. Whether or not this is done may depend on the time available.)

B. "Getting in Touch with Your Inner Self."⁵ (Note: In this and all other fantasy exercises, the slash, or /, indicates a pause in the directions.) Stand for a moment and hunch and wiggle your shoulders, tense and release the muscles all over your body. Do this until you feel your whole body./ Now, sit in a chair or on the floor in a comfortable position with your back upright. Close your eyes and experience your body. Be aware of how it feels -- tension, pain, pleasure, heaviness, strength, energy -- whatever you are now experiencing in different parts of your body./ Do whatever is necessary to enhance your experience of your body -- perhaps concentrating on your breathing, letting tension flow out with each exhalation, and letting renewing energy flow into you as you inhale./ Be aware of the pleasurable flow of energy into your body. Be in your revitalized body for a few minutes./

⁵ Adapted from Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Growth Counseling: Hope-Centered Methods of Actualizing Human Wholeness (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 39-41.

Keeping in touch with your body, picture your consciousness as a room within yourself, a place where you are alone in your awareness./ Look around the room. Be aware of its size, shape, color, furnishings, temperature, everything about it. Be aware, also, of how you feel in the room of your consciousness./ Do whatever you need to do to make this room of your consciousness more comfortable and enjoyable. Change it in any way necessary to give your spirit room to breathe -- change its size, shape, redecorate. It's your room, so make it a good place to be./ Just enjoy your inner space in a peaceful but nurturing way./

Keeping in touch with your body and your consciousness, think of the person you would most enjoy being with right now. Picture that person vividly./ Let yourself be close to that person, relating in warm, loving ways./ Be aware of how your feelings have changed./

Now bring that person into the room of your consciousness. Share with them the feelings you experienced in that room just a few moments ago. As you do this, be aware of any more changes of feeling you experience./ Keeping in touch with what you are feeling right now, let that feeling or those feelings flow between you and the special person with you in the room of your consciousness./ Now come back to this time and place. When you're ready, open your eyes./ Let's share our experiences.

C. "The Box in the Meadow."⁶ Get into a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Become aware of your body, of your breathing and the sensations you're feeling. Take a few deep breaths to relax yourself./

⁶Ibid., 72-73.

Now, in your imagination, picture yourself inside a closed box. Be in the box./ Examine your box. Notice what it's made of; push on the sides -- do they give any, or are they resistant to your pushing? Experience being boxed in. How does your body feel now?/ Examine your box, looking for a way out./ If you've found a way out, get out of the box now./ If you're still in the box, invite someone to help you get out, being aware of how it feels to ask for help./ Be alone in a beautiful, warm, springtime meadow. Let yourself enjoy the freedom, the sun, the openness of the meadow. Enjoy yourself in whatever ways you choose./ Be aware of the differences in your feelings now and when you were in the box. How does your body feel?/ Now, invite someone special to join you in the meadow. Who is that person or persons? See them vividly. Enjoy the meadow together, being aware of how this changes your feelings in any way./ Now, recall yourself as a child. See that child in the meadow. Let the child enjoy the meadow with you as an adult. Be aware of your feelings in this moment./ Do something to show your liking of yourself as a child. Hold the child tenderly, communicating your love and esteem. Be aware of your feelings./ Now, go back to the place where you left the box. How do you feel about it now?/ Do whatever you want to with your box./ Before you open your eyes, reflect on your experience. In your life what reminds you of your experience in the box? in the meadow?/ How does your life-style cause you to be boxed in? free?/ How do you feel about your experience with your inner child?/ What do you choose to do with what you've learned in this exercise?/ When you're ready, come back to this place and open your eyes./ Let's share our experiences.

D. "Androgyny test."⁷ (Note: This test is a good way of helping persons get in touch with the femaleness and maleness that is present in every person. Our society has conditioned us to believe that men have certain traits which are seldom, if ever, found in women, and that women have certain traits seldom, if ever, found in men. The purpose of the Androgyny Test is to help us see that most, if not all, male traits and female traits, as defined by society, are really human traits, and that well integrated persons have, know that they have, and are in affirming touch with all these human traits. After passing out the test sheets, ask each person to rate each of the characteristics in the columns according to the 1 to 7 scale at the top of the paper. These ratings are for themselves. After everyone has finished rating themselves, have them mark an "M" beside the first trait, "self-reliant," an "F" beside the second, "yielding," and an "A" beside the third, "helpful." "M" stands for "male," "F" for "female," and "A" for "androgynous." This "M," "F," "A" rotation is to be repeated to the end. The next step is to add up all their "M" scores and then all their "F" scores. The smaller score is subtracted from the larger. The result is the person's "androgyny" score, which in the fully androgynous person would be zero. Explain to the group that the closer their score is to zero the more androgynous a person he-she is, that is, the better they have both the so-called "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics integrated within them. A copy of the "Androgyny Test" will be found in Appendix E.)

⁷From a classroom experience with Charlotte Holt Clinebell.

E. "The Dancing Clown."⁸ For our final exercise let's stand in a circle. Close your eyes and try to get in touch with the Spirit of Life, with the Spirit that gives life to our being, the Spirit that makes us alive as persons./ As you get in touch with the Spirit of Life, see it as a Dancing Clown. There is a Dancing Clown within each one of us, and when we can feel it and let it free in our lives, it enlivens us and our relationships with ourselves and with others. Be in touch with the Dancing Clown that is in you./ One of the things the Dancing Clown does for us to bring a dimension of lightness into our lives, a lightness that is the opposite of heaviness. Our Dancing Clown enables us to rise above the things which burden us in life, the worries, cares, anxieties, fears, and anything else that weighs heavily upon us, that causes us to feel that we're getting less out of life than is there. Feel the lightness now of your Dancing Clown, feel yourself being lifted up by your Dancing Clown, see if your Dancing Clown can make you fly./ Now reach out and find and hold the hands of the persons on each side of you. As we become connected to one another, feel the presence of each person in the room. Feel their nearness, feel the relatedness we have with each other./ Now, let the Dancing Clown within you go out to the others here. Feel its Spirit of Life flowing from you to every person here, and flowing from them to you. Feel our Dancing Clowns, our Spirits flowing around and around the circle in our connectedness./ As you feel that Spirit, be aware of what is happening inside you, of what your Dancing Clown and the

⁸This exercise is from a classroom experience with Howard Clinebell.

Spirit of others in you enables you to do and to be./ Now, when you're ready, open your eyes./ Let's share our experience.

III. Evaluation.

Using the evaluation form found in Appendix C, have each person evaluate the session. Encourage them to answer all the questions but do not insist on their doing so. Answers to all the questions will be helpful in considering future workshops, and may give the leader hints about how the remaining sessions can be made more effective. However, we must allow people to refrain from answering any questions they are not sure about or for which they have no answer at the moment. After the evaluation forms have been turned in to the leader, he-she may wish to remind the group of the relational dynamic to be explored in the next session, and encourage the participants to borrow and read books from the book table.

Appropriate closure, such as a Friendship Circle, should conclude the session unless it is being held in a retreat setting, where a closure for the entire experience may be more appropriate.

Session Two -- "How Do You Read Me?"

I. Introduction.

In this session we will be exploring what is seen by many persons as the most important dynamic of human relationship, and especially of the marriage relationship. It is communication, and one reason it is so important is because it is "the means by which relating takes place. Its quality determines how a relationship is established and whether it is

continued or terminated."⁹ The crucial role communication plays in marriage can be seen in the results of a survey of several hundred married couples who were asked what was "the most important factor affecting good relationships in their marriage." The answer of the majority was the ability to talk things over¹⁰ -- communication. Another verification of the importance of communication in marriage is found in a study made by the Family Service Association of America, which has over three hundred affiliated counseling agencies in North America. This four year study included a section on why marriages go wrong. Hundreds of skilled counselors listed the main causes of marriage troubles among couples they had worked with. Obviously, any one couple could and did have difficulties in more than one area listed, but far above all the other areas listed was difficulties in communication. In 86 percent of the troubled marriages these counselors dealt with, communication was a weakness, as husbands and wives complained, "We can't talk to each other."¹¹ Finally, Reuel Howe, one of the nation's leading pastoral counselors and teacher of pastoral counselors, says:

If there is any one indispensable insight with which a young married couple should begin their life together, it is that they should try to keep open, at all costs, the lines of communication between them.¹²

⁹Howard and Charlotte Clinebell, Intimate, 87.

¹⁰James R. Hine, Your Marriage: Analysis and Renewal (Danville IL: Interstate, 1966), 23.

¹¹David and Vera Mace, How to Have a Happy Marriage (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), 71-72.

¹²Quoted in Howard and Charlotte Clinebell, Intimate, 87.

The problem is that communication is not always easily accomplished. A large part of our failure to communicate with each other is that we sometimes forget that it takes place on many levels other than verbal. Communication can also be done with a touch, a glance, a smile, frown, or other facial expression, by body posture, or an action which speaks louder than words.¹³ Again, communication happens in "the bringing of flowers, the cooking of a favorite dessert, a handshake, a surly grumble, an unexpected holding of the hand, a kiss...."¹⁴ You need not speak with your mouth to communicate.

Another problem in communication, related to all of this, is that we often think of communication only, or primarily, of transmitting information between persons. But just as communication takes place in many ways and on many levels, so it also reveals to others, both verbally and non-verbally, our feelings, thoughts, attitudes, desires, hopes, etc. Communication is always multi-leveled, and is transmitted in many ways, often simultaneously. Because of this the "talker" may be sending messages he-she is not aware of, therefore the "hearer" may be confused in both his-her reception and response. This can and does result in poor communication, which tends to breed more of the same.

Another problem in communicating with others is that we often forget that it is a two-way street. There is not only a "speaker," there must also be a "hearer," a "listener." For communication to be effective

¹³Hine, Your Marriage, 23.

¹⁴William J. Lederer and Don D. Jackson, The Mirages of Marriage (New York: Norton, 1968), 99.

that second party must listen to and hear what the first party is transmitting, whether verbally or otherwise. It has been observed that too often when someone is talking to us, rather than really listening and hearing we are preparing in the back of our minds what we are going to say when our turn to talk comes. Communication demands both speaker and hearer.

What we are going to do in this session is some work on non-verbal communication, practicing telling each other some things without the use of spoken words, and then to move onto the verbal level where we will explore some things that are important to keep in mind as we do communicate with spoken words. Finally, we will put into practice these communication skills in an important area of marriage -- mutual need satisfaction.

II. Communication Exercises and Applications.

A. "Non-Verbal Communication"

1. Have couples sit facing each other, knees touching. With their eyes closed they are to explore each other's hands, being aware of what they learn about each other in the way their hands are explored by their partners and in how they explore and experience their partner's hands. After a few minutes, the leader might ask them to use their hands, eyes still closed, to communicate feelings to one another. These feelings can include warmth and love, interest, caring, even anger or frustration, fear or irritation. The idea here is to open the participants to the wide range of feelings that can be communicated on the non-verbal level. When the exercise is completed (five to six minutes at

most), have the participants debrief their experience in couples, then in the total group.

2.¹⁵ With couples sitting facing each other, knees touching, have them explore each other's face with their fingers, much as a blind person might. Again, this is an exercise done with the eyes closed. Tell them to try and learn the other's face through their fingertips, to be aware of facial features, seeing if they can interpret facial expressions as a way of being aware of what the other person is feeling. When they are finished exploring each other's face, they should open their eyes at the same time and gaze into each other's eyes for about one minute. Debrief in couples, then in the total group.

B. "Verbal Communication.

1.¹⁶ Couples should sit facing each other. One makes a statement to his-her partner which he-she believes is true. It may be any statement at all. The other person is to respond with questions beginning "Do you mean..." to determine whether or not he-she understands the statement. The first speaker's answer to each question is to be "Yes" or "No." The object is to get three "Yeses" in answer. This can be done a number of times, alternating who makes the first statement. This exercise can be debriefed in the total group. The purpose of the exercise is to point up the importance of listening and hearing as a part

¹⁵ Based on an exercise in Howard R. Lewis and Harold S. Streitfeld, Growth Games (New York: Bantam, 1972), 211.

¹⁶ Ibid., 49-50.

of communication. It also points up the importance of feedback as a way of verifying what has been communicated.

2.¹⁷ This exercise deals with the importance of being clear when sending a message, so that the receiver does not get a garbled message. Have couples sit facing each other. One makes a statement he-she believes to be true, such as "I am tired." The other person then asks, "What do you mean?" The first speaker answers with another short statement, to which the second repeats, "What do you mean?" This process is repeated until there are no more answers to the question. Reverse roles. When all couples have finished, debrief in the total group.

C. "The Intentional Marriage Method."¹⁸

Now we're going to try out some of the things we've learned in the Intentional Marriage Method, developed by Howard Clinebell. It's a way of using the positive strengths of your relationship as a basis for meeting more of your needs. Find a comfortable place to sit facing each other, not too close to other couples./ (The slash means stopping for directions to be completed.)

Begin the Intentional Marriage Method by one of you completing this sentence, "I appreciate in you...", as many times as you can. Tell your partner all the things you like, such as "I like the way you wear your hair," or "I appreciate your mind," etc. The other person just listens, receiving these affirmations. As soon as one finishes, the

¹⁷Based on Lewis and Streitfeld, 263-264.

¹⁸Howard Clinebell, Marriage Enrichment, 35.

other does the same, completing the sentence, "I appreciate in you...", as many times as possible./

Now discuss how you feel about what you've just done./

Write on a card all the things you can remember that your partner appreciated in you./

Communication skills are improved with practice, so look at each other's lists and see how well you have listened to each other./

This first step should have helped you get in touch with many of the strengths in your relationship. They provide a foundation upon which the rest of the Intentional Marriage Method is based.

One way to improve marriage relationships is to clearly state needs and wants in a direct way. The second step, then, is to complete the sentence, "I need from you...". Do this as you did in the first step, taking turns completing the sentence as many times as you can. You might say "I need you to touch me more," or "I need more time alone with you," whatever expresses your need. The important thing is getting your needs out in the open./

Now discuss how you feel about this experience./

On the other side of your card, list all the needs you can remember your partner sharing with you./

Now check each other's lists to see how well you heard this time./

The next part may seem a bit tedious, but it's really important. Working together, pick out those needs which are similar or the same on both lists and put an "A" beside them./

Now put a "C" beside those needs that conflict with each other -- for example, one wants more touching, the other less./

Finally, put a "B" beside the needs that are left, those that are not conflicting but are simply different./

The next step is to begin making your relationship more mutually satisfying. You do this by discussing the "A" needs on your lists and decide on one shared need which seems both important and achievable. Experiencing success is important in improving relationships. After you've picked an "A" need, plan just how and when you'll do something to meet it. As you do this write out a clear, workable plan. It should include a brief description of the need and how you'll work at meeting it. Describe any changes of behavior that will be necessary. This written plan will allow you to check back later and know when you've done it./

Congratulations! You have just used writing skills to add a small but significant clause to your relational contract.

The final step is share your plan with someone else. This is helpful in meeting your shared need with one another, because it commits us to encouraging each other's growth. Get together with two other couples and share your plan with them.

As you do this, give each other feedback through encouragement and raising questions that will help clarify or strengthen the plans you hear others share with you./

Now discuss your experience in checking out your plans, including how you might continue to use such a sharing group for mutual support and growth./

As you continue using the Intentional Marriage Method, you may find it helpful to keep a diary of your progress in working out your plans. After you've used this method to satisfy several "A" or shared needs, move on to the "B" needs, remembering that with them a new skill is needed — negotiating a mutual agreement which satisfies one need of each person.

"C", or conflicting needs are the most difficult to satisfy. They require both negotiation and compromise to find a midpoint where both feel partially satisfied. However, if you put off working on conflicting needs until you have experienced success in the "A" and "B" needs, you can work them out successfully! Good luck as you use the Intentional Marriage Method!

III. Evaluation.

Distribute the evaluation forms, asking each participant to fill one out and leave it with the leader. Invite the group to read books from the book table. The topic of the next session, "Trust," may be announced. An appropriate closure should be used to end the session.

Session Three -- "Whom Do You Trust?"

I. Introduction.

Thus far we have looked at self-image and communication as two of the dynamics in the marriage relationship. In this session we will explore the dynamic of trust, which is "one of the necessary ingredients

in a workable marriage...."¹⁹ If a married couple does not have trust in one another their relationship is greatly diminished and they will not find in marriage the meaning and personal fulfillment it potentially has.

"Trust" can be defined as "confidence or faith in, or reliance on a person or thing." It quite often refers to "reliance on personal integrity in someone," to regard them as "dependable." But there is a problem in these definitions in that "they imply that trust can be unilateral...."²⁰ Trust, especially in marriage, is not a one-way street in which one spouse's trust in the other is not returned. "Trust is developed over a period of time as a result of experience," by an "exchange of behavior" between husband and wife."²¹ Trust is an end result of clear communication between two persons, in which each comes to know "what kind of behavior to expect from the other," a situation in which "mutual confidence develops."²² What this means is that trust is a relational matter, something which is continually building and developing as the lives of two persons intertwine with each other. It is not created by our expectations of each other, rather it grows from our shared experiences in which we come to know each other more and more deeply. In this sense, then, trust can never be unilateral.

¹⁹Lederer and Jackson, 106.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 106-107.

²²Ibid., 107.

If we see trust from that kind of perspective, then the original context of the word can come into play in our understanding and experience. According to William Lederer and Don Jackson in their book, The Mirages of Marriage,

The word "trust" originally came from the Scandinavian language and meant "to comfort," "to console," "to confide in."

.
To trust...meant to give comfort and cheer when needed. It had nothing to do with estimating another's behavior.²³

To see trust in this way is to realize its deeply personal nature, to know that trust is a quality which enables a person to reach out to another in their times of need. As such it becomes a way in which spouses strengthen each other and motivate one another to personal growth.

For the kind of trust that is being talked about here to be a part of a marriage, and to grow within a marriage, there are some things required of husband and wife. The bottom line is that "both spouses must be...open and truthful with each other."²⁴ This is not always easy to achieve, however, because lying has become so accepted in our culture. It seems so much easier to tell a lie, even just the proverbial "little white lie," in order to avoid confrontation or hurting the other person's feelings, or to "save face" for oneself. Eventually, however, most lies catch up with us, and whatever trust had existed is, if not destroyed, greatly damaged.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 109.

A second requirement if trust is to be present in marriage is that both spouses must be realistic. Every situation, every aspect of the relationship must be seen as and for what it is. Also, husbands and wives must accept the fact that everyone changes over the course of time, realizing at the same time that change in one's spouse is not a betrayal of the trust in him-her.²⁵

Finally, trust comes and it grows through "the constant exercise of intelligence, truthfulness, and courage." It develops in a marriage "by mutual conscious effort, often taking two steps forward and one back...."²⁶ Trust is not always an easy thing to achieve, but it is absolutely essential to a good marriage, and the rewards it brings are well worth the effort demanded.

II. Trust-Building Exercises.

A. Trust Circle I. In circles of six to eight persons have the participants hold hands and step back until their arms are comfortably stretched out full length, about waist high. Making sure that each person has a firm grasp of the hands on either side of him-her, have the persons in the circle lean back. The learning to be experienced is trust in all the persons in the circle to keep each other from falling because they are connected (or "related") in the circle.

The first time have the circles lean back for about six to eight seconds, then stand upright and relax for a few seconds. Do the exercise

²⁵Ibid., 112.

²⁶Ibid., 113.

again, this time leaning back for fifteen seconds, then a third time for thirty seconds. Upon completion of the exercise, debrief the experience in the total group.

B. Trust Circle II.²⁷ Have each group of six to eight persons stand close together in a small circle with one person in the center (each person in the group takes his-her turn in the center). With eyes closed, the person in the center falls backward without moving his-her feet. The persons in the group then pass the center person around the circle. The person in the center keeps his-her eyes closed throughout the experience, being aware of how it feels to trust the group.

When all have been in the center of the circle, debrief the exercise in the total group.

C. Group Lift. Each person takes a turn lying on the floor, face up, eyes closed. The other members of the group line up on both sides and lift the person. This lifting can be done in intermediate stages, such as knee high, waist high, shoulder high, and overhead. The group may wish to rock the person being lifted, or other things in addition to the lifting.

Following completion of the exercise, debrief in the total group.

D. Trust Dyad I.²⁸ One partner lies on his-her back, relaxing the head and neck. The other partner is to lift the first partner's head in his-her hands and rotate it. (This exercise is harder than it may

²⁷Based on an exercise in Howard Clinebell, Marriage Enrichment, 50.

²⁸Lewis and Streitfeld, 219.

seem. Many persons are likely to discover difficulty in giving control of their head to someone else.) After a few minutes positions are reversed.

After the exercise, debrief first in dyads, then in the total group.

E. Trust Dyad II. Partners stand about eighteen to twenty-four inches apart, both facing the same direction. The person in front falls backward, without moving his-her feet, letting the other partner catch him-her. After doing this a few times, reverse positions.

The dyads might try increasing the distance between them, seeing how far apart they are willing to stand and fall backward.

Debrief in dyads, then in total group.

F. Trust Dyad III. In this exercise each person takes a turn, with eyes closed, being led by the other, and the second person leading. It is important for the partner being led to keep his-her eyes closed during the time they are guided (a minimum of five minutes), trusting the other person. This exercise may have more meaning if it can be done outdoors. A variation is to incorporate jogging into the time each person is led. After at least five minutes, reverse roles.

This exercise may be debriefed in the total group.

III. Evaluation.

Evaluation forms should be distributed and filled out. After reminding participants about the book table, and perhaps mentioning the next session's topic, "Sexuality," an appropriate closure, such as a Friendship Circle, should be used to end the session.

Session Four -- "Sexcessful Marriage"

I. Introduction.

During this session we will explore that dynamic of marriage which many people view as the intimate side of marriage. In truth, sex, while it may be the most physical manifestation of intimacy in marriage, is only one evidence of marital intimacy. But whatever we want to say about it, however we want to see it, sex is important to marriage.

As we look at it, however, our focus in this session will not be on the biology of sex, the mechanics. Instead we will look at sexuality, trying to gain a broader perspective on the whole matter.

Two perceptive observers of marriage state that "there is considerable evidence that an individual's perception of the sexual relationship is more related to marital satisfaction than the sexual act itself." They cite a study made at an Ohio university in which several hundred couples were interviewed. An interesting result was that both those reporting their marriages as "satisfactory" and those reporting theirs as "unsatisfactory" gave the frequency of their intercourse as twice a week. The difference was that among the unhappy couples wives felt that twice weekly was less than their husbands wished but just right for them personally, while the husbands said it was more than their wives wished but satisfactory for them. The happy husbands and wives said intercourse twice a week was satisfying both to themselves and their spouses. The authors conclude, "In other words, the problem was in the couples' communication and not in the actual frequency of their sexual

relations."²⁹ Attitudes and perceptions about sex and sexuality have a place of paramount importance in marriage and its sexual dimension.

Sex is one of the most powerful drives in persons, a dynamic force in human relationships. As such it colors everything else.³⁰ Thus, how each couple, and each partner, sees sex and concludes for himself, and for themselves together, just what the experience of sexual intercourse means is of utmost importance.

As we consider this dynamic of marriage, here are some important things to look at. First, sex is a gift of the Creative Force, the Spirit of Life, God. As such, it is good in itself, and is to be received with joy and gratitude. Like any gift, sex is a source of pleasure, of enjoyment, and must be affirmed in a way that brings warmth, joy, and resilience to the total relationship called "marriage."³¹

Second, sex is a very important means of spouses expressing their feelings toward one another, an intense way of saying "I love you," and it must never be separated from that role.³² Sex should never be a weapon used to punish one's partner, a means of manipulating the other person, a bartering block on which it is traded for something in return,

²⁹ Lederer and Jackson, 116-117.

³⁰ Howard and Charlotte Clinebell, Intimate, 135.

³¹ Ibid.

³² John E. Eichenlaub, New Approaches to Sex in Marriage (New York: Dell, 1967), 106.

or anything other than "the central core of an intense human relationship."³³

Because sex is the most intense way of saying "I love you" to another person, it is a means of communication. The word "intercourse" means, in fact, "communication." Sex communicates love, and it communicates knowledge, for in this shared act of physical love "one always learns something about another person."³⁴ The communication that is sexual is of the deepest kind. There come times in life when words fail, when a person is unable to utter with the tongue what is in the heart. In those moments

the importance of sexual intercourse is that it affords a husband and wife with a medium for those mutual disclosures for which no words can be found; the senses become the channel of communication for all that lies too deep for utterance and yet must somehow be told.³⁵

Another important aspect of sex and sexuality is that it is a source of personal enrichment, especially when its goal is more than mere self-satisfaction.

The fact of human experience seems to be that persons enjoy deeper, more lasting, and more profound satisfaction when the normal experience of sex lust is not an end in itself but a symbolic expression of other values. This, after all, is true not only about sex but about other desires also. We enjoy eating at a banquet in honor of a friend more than eating in solitude.³⁶

³³Ibid.

³⁴William G. Cole, Sex and Love in the Bible (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 92.

³⁵Bailey, 60.

³⁶Peter A. Bertocci, The Human Venture in Sex, Love, and Marriage (New York: Association Press, 1955), 47-48.

It is in relationship to other persons that we grow the most and find our lives enhanced and enriched. The sexual dynamic of marriage is one of the greatest growth producers so long as it is a joyful means of communicating one's deepest feelings for his-her spouse, deriving joy, warmth, and pleasure from it.

Finally, sex is a way in which we can experience our wholeness as individuals and grow in unity with our spouse. Sex is not "a mere physical act which takes place on the periphery, as it were, of personal experience." It is, rather, a part of life involving and affecting the whole person, man and woman, at the very center and depth of life. Because of this, husband and wife can afterwards never "be as if they had never come together."³⁷ In this deeply personal encounter we grow, coming to "deeper self-discovery and awareness of greater depth in the other."³⁸

In the wholeness of self which comes from that experience we also grow toward a greater, deeper unity with our spouse. If, as a gift of God, sex is seen as having a kind of sacredness about it, then "it re-enacts and renews [our] man-woman relationship in a ritual which can bind [us] ever closer...."³⁹ In that binding we discover and grow into the unity of man and woman that the Spirit of Life, God, seems to intend

³⁷ Bailey, 51-52.

³⁸ Seward Hiltner, Sex Ethics and the Kinsey Report (New York: Association Press, 1953), 21-22.

³⁹ Eichenlaub, 113.

as normative for most people. This physical coupling of man and woman can be seen, in the biblical context of the Creation accounts, as the inner and often inexpressible urge to become again "one flesh." Sex is the great unifier for husband and wife.

II. Film -- "Sexuality and Communication."

At this point in the session the film, "Sexuality and Communication," or another suitable film, is to be viewed. Whatever film or audio-visual is used should be carefully previewed by the workshop leader. It should be briefly introduced in the leader's own words.

After viewing the film, time should be given to discussing it as couples. Following that there should be group discussion. This may include the following points: the sharing of general response to the film; discussion of specific points in the film, particularly any new learning which took place for the participants; a sharing and discussion of points which were not understood; response to the question, "Did the film help you see sexuality in marriage in any different light than before seeing the film?"; any other items of interest or question arising from the group.

III. Evaluation.

Distribute evaluation forms, asking each group member to fill one out. After calling attention to the book table, remind the group that the next session is the final one, dealing with the spiritual dimension in marriage. End with an appropriate closure.

Session Five -- "The Love Triangle (God, You, and Me)"

I. Introduction.

The spiritual dimension of marriage is an important one, for "a shared spiritual life strengthens a marriage."⁴⁰ Surveys indicate the truth of that statement, showing that the happiest marriages are those in which a common faith or religious belief is part of the relationship, a faith made concrete through church membership and regular participation in the purpose and work of the church, and by making that faith and spirit evident in home and family living.⁴¹ In our final session you will explore some of the spiritual dimensions of your relationship. After you've done that we will take some time to go through the marriage ceremony to see the rich meaning it contains.

Intimacy, one of the hallmarks of a good marriage, has been defined as "the interlocking of two individual persons joined by a bond which partially overcomes their separateness." The authors of that definition go on to say:

In the fullest expression of their intimacy there is a vertical dimension, a sense of relatedness to the universe which both strengthens the marital relationship and is strengthened by it. Quite apart from any church or churchly considerations, the spiritual dimension of marriage is a practical source of food for marital growth and health. No single factor does more to give a marriage joy or to keep it both a venture and an adventure in mutual fulfillment than shared commitment to spiritual discovery.⁴²

⁴⁰Howard and Charlotte Clinebell, Intimate, 185.

⁴¹James R. Hine, Grounds for Marriage (Danville, IL: Interstate, 1971), 57.

⁴²Howard and Charlotte Clinebell, Intimate, 179.

Whether you want to see that spiritual dimension in terms of God, the Spirit of Life, Tillich's "ultimate concern" or "ground of our being," or simply that force or being which/who transcends our earthly existence, the above statement speaks directly and meaningfully to the importance of the spiritual as a dynamic of marriage. The goal of our time together in this session is to get you, as couples, in touch with that dynamic in your relationship.

II. Spiritual Sharing and Enrichment.⁴³

Distribute to each couple the following sentences, which they are to complete in a time of sharing with each other. Each couple should find a place that is separated from the others, and take turns, as a couple, completing the sentences one at a time. As much time as is needed should be taken to discuss thoroughly the issues and feelings that arise. This is more important than trying to get through the entire list of sentences. About one hour should be allotted for this sharing exercise.

Sentences for sharing. "The ideas and issues which excite me the most are...;" "The things that are most worth living for right now are...;" "I feel the most joy (pain, hope, lonely, together) when...;" "What I really believe about God is...;" "I feel closest to (most distant from) God when...;" "I get spiritually high when...;" "The beliefs that mean the most to me now are...;" "The beliefs from my

⁴³Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Growth Counseling for Mid-Years Couples (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 41-42.

childhood which no longer make sense are...;" "Life has the least (most) meaning for me when...;" "I feel closest (most distant) from you spiritually when...;" "The way I really feel about the church is...;" "I'd like to do the following, to enjoy more spiritual sharing...;" "Other things about our spiritual growth that concern me are...;" "The way I feel about discussing these questions is...."

After the couples have finished, or a halt has been called, with encouragement to the couples to complete their sharing on any sentences they didn't get to, a quick debriefing of the exercise might be very helpful.

III. A Look at the Marriage Ceremony.

About forty-five minutes to an hour should be set aside for a full interpretation of the marriage ceremony. It will be helpful in doing this to have the ceremony reproduced and available for the couples to follow along as this is done. The marriage ceremony I use is found in Appendix D, in annotated form.

Such a presentation should be flexible, allowing for questions and comments from the group. Particular attention should be given to the "theological statement" or "address to the congregation" at the beginning of the ceremony proper, and to the meaning and significance of the marriage vows, but comment should be made on the entire ceremony, section by section. As a part of this portion of the session, couples could be invited to go through the ceremony carefully, and if they wish to suggest or discuss possible alterations to the ceremony, or to write their own

ceremony, they should contact their pastor and set a time to explore this with him-her.

IV. Evaluation.

At the final session two evaluation sheets might be useful. The first one should evaluate the final meeting of the workshop; the second could be used to evaluate the workshop as a whole. Encourage every workshop participant to fill out both. At this time the workshop leader(s) should express appreciation to the participants for their attendance and cooperation. It should be stated that any couple wishing to consult further with the pastor or leader should contact him-her individually to set a time for this.

An appropriate closure for the final session would be a "Love Feast." An unsliced loaf of bread and a chalice or goblet of grape juice or wine is placed on a small table in the center of the group. The leader can make a statement about shared life in marriage being symbolized by the sharing of these simple foods. As the couples are ready, within themselves, they go to the table, and tearing a piece of bread from the loaf, dip it into the wine or juice and feed it to their partner. After every one has participated, a closing circle and song can end the workshop.

Chapter 5

WORKSHOP TEST AND RESULTS

Conditions.

The premarital and newly wed workshop design was tested by conducting it in the abbreviated weekend setting, that is, Friday evening and all day Saturday. This shorter setting was necessary because of other commitments which prevented my being absent from pastoral responsibilities on Sunday morning and thus being able to use the longer weekend setting, and by academic deadlines which negated using the five week format. I felt this abbreviated time span was not a drawback. With short breaks in the middle of segments, and longer breaks in between them, the intensity of the schedule which was anticipated in discussing possible workshop settings in Chapter 4 was not nearly as much a factor as I thought it might be. I would have no hesitation conducting future workshops using this abbreviated weekend schedule, nor in recommending it to others who might conduct this or similar workshops.

Participants.

The number of participants was disappointing, although the quality of participation tempered that feeling. Five couples, three engaged and two newly wed, were recruited with the help of clergy colleagues. However, one couple had to drop out at the last moment due to illness, and another evidently forgot to come. Thus, we began on Friday evening with three couples, the minimum number originally set for

the experience. One of those three couples had to drop out on Saturday due to illness, which meant that four segments, or about 80 percent, of the workshop was conducted with only two couples participating. The experience with those two couples was very good, but the disappointment at so few participants was shared by at least one of those four persons as expressed on his-her evaluation form.

Of the original three couples who began the workshop the following age groupings and number of this marriage were checked on a simple survey form:

<u>Women:</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Marriage</u>
	under 20	first
	31-40	second
	51-60	third
<u>Men:</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Marriage</u>
	21-30	first
	31-40	second
	51-60	second

Two of the couples were engaged (one of whom dropped out on Saturday because of illness), the other had been married for eight months.

Neither of the engaged couples had gone through any other premarital counseling, nor had the married couple prior to their wedding.

Leadership.

Leadership was provided by one person -- this writer. My background in group facilitation includes a course in "Group Dynamics and Counseling," extensive reading in this field, and considerable experience in small group work over the past fifteen years as a local church pastor. I did not feel that lack of a co-leader detracted from the workshop, although I hope for future workshops to recruit my wife as a co-leader.

Procedure.

Procedurally, the workshop design found in Chapter 4 was followed, except that evaluation was done only of the entire workshop experience. (It should be noted that some of the exercises originally included in the session on communication, and which were used in the testing, have been deleted in the refinement of the experience, and no longer appear there.) The third segment, that dealing with trust, had to be shortened because there were not enough persons to do all the trust circle exercises. Also, a physical problem prevented one couple from doing Trust Dyad II, so that exercise was not done. That shortened session, plus only a short discussion following the film, "Sexuality and Communication," enabled us to work the final session on the spiritual dimensions of marriage in before dinner. Therefore, dinner together was the final part of the workshop, and the suggested "Love Feast" was eliminated. It would be my hope and is my intent that in future workshops those truncations would not have to be made.

In the opening session time was included for goal setting by the group. After sharing with the group some of my goals as the facilitator, their goals were solicited. Goals expressed were:

Facilitator: exposure of the group to a parabolic understanding of human relationship.

: facilitation of personal growth, or its beginnings, in the participants.

: equipping participants with relational understandings and/or skills.

: establishment or deepening of relationship with the group members.

Group: to work on better communication.

: to "break through all the decision-making in these last few weeks before the wedding, and have some time to relate to each other."

: learn more about the different areas of relationship in the context of marriage.

Summary of Participant Evaluations.

The four persons who participated in the workshop on Saturday evaluated the workshop, using the form found in Appendix C. The general evaluations of the workshop were a 7, an 8, a 9, and a 10. The most helpful things were listed as the session on communication, especially the Intentional Marriage Method; the film, "Sexuality and Communication;" the spiritual sharing in the closing session; and "being together to experience each other in a different framework."

The section of the form on the least helpful part of the workshop was filled in by only two persons, who mentioned the biblical input on the parables, and the time spent going through the wedding service.

Participants generally felt that the goals they had in attending the workshop were met during the experience. The most helpful thing in doing this appeared to be spending a large block of time as couples and the couple sharing throughout the workshop. One participant said he-she would have appreciated more time on looking at self-image, even that was never overtly mentioned as a goal.

An interesting and gratifying result of the experience that was mentioned on three of the evaluations was that they planned to be more intentional in the area of spiritual growth and sharing. Participation in future enrichment experiences and reading in some of the areas covered by the workshop were mentioned as helpful follow-on experiences.

Both the written evaluations and spoken comments lead me to assess the workshop as a useful and helpful experience for the participants.

Facilitator's Evaluation.

My general evaluation of the workshop would be between a 7 and 8. I was generally pleased with how the event went, and believe it was a good experience. Based both on the participants' comments and my own feelings I would say that the workshop's greatest strengths were the sessions on communication, especially the Intentional Marriage Method, and the final session on spiritual dimensions of marriage. I also felt the film, "Sexuality and Communication," was excellent, and that more couples viewing and responding to it might have created more and longer discussion of it.

The weaknesses I detected were that while the session on communication was very good, it went too long, and should be shorter; that while it is difficult to tell from the shortened time spent on it, the session on trust may need some expanding, although another workshop will need to be conducted to check out that feeling; and that it might be helpful to develop a more specific way of dealing with the film, "Sexuality and Communication," although that, too, will need another

workshop experience to be certain that the problem is not the need of more participating couples.

Refinements in the Design.

At this point there are only two refinements made in the original workshop design. As intimated above, further refinements in the sessions on trust and sexuality may be found necessary after a future workshop experience. The first immediate refinement has been to shorten the session on communication. This was done by eliminating one non-verbal and one verbal communication exercise, as well as a role-playing situation dealing with conflict resolution. It was a difficult decision to eliminate the conflict resolution role-play, but I felt it had to be done in the interest of time; the session was simply too long to include it. One of the reasons for this is that it took longer than I anticipated to complete the Intentional Marriage Method, but it is more than worth it from my perspective, for the IMM is really the "heart" of that session, and proved to be extremely helpful to the couples.

The second refinement was to rewrite the presentation on the parabolic understanding of human relationship in order to make it a bit shorter than the original version, less of a mini-sermon, and more to the point on how the five parables help us see the important qualities of relationship. After discussion with the doctoral committee the exercise of couples parabling was also added.

I believe these refinements will make the experience more workable and helpful. As future workshops are conducted, particular attention will be given the questions I have raised concerning the

sessions on trust and sexuality, and any refinements that may be deemed necessary to strengthen them and increase their helpfulness.

Personal Learnings.

In addition to what I have already mentioned, two other learnings must be noted here. One is the importance of personal or telephone contact with every couple a week prior to the workshop to remind them that it is going to take place. I did not do this, and although it wouldn't have helped in the cases of the two couples where illness prevented their participation, it would have meant a third couple on Saturday.

A second learning is that perhaps four couples might be a better minimum number, and that it would be good to work extra hard at recruiting eight couples. I say this because the opening session felt a bit "bare," somehow, with only the seven of us taking part, to say nothing of having only two couples and the leader on Saturday. If eight couples, the maximum number, were recruited and participated, it would be a good experience, for every person wouldn't feel under any kind of "pressure" to respond to or discuss everything that happens, which I felt was the case with only the two couples (although not all the time).

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Each Chapter.

The purpose of this paper has been to design a workshop for engaged and newly-wed couples in which they may explore, through a variety of ways, some of the important dynamics of relationship, with particular reference to marriage. In the first chapter the current status of marriage was briefly examined and the possible responses of the Church set forth — marriage enrichment programs and more creative and effective premarital and newly-wed training. The latter response has been the concern of this paper. Also in the opening chapter, some biblical-theological assumptions for premarital preparation were discussed, along with the question of the Church versus a secular setting for such preparation, some of the difficulties involved in this ministry, and the proposal for the workshop approach. The idea of a biblical foundation was also presented.

Chapter 2 dealt with the area of relationship as seen in the parables of Jesus. In that discussion parables were established as a source of Christian authority, followed by an examination of the manner in which parables address an individual in his-her assessment or reassessment of how life is lived in relationship to other persons. In that examination a six-fold process was developed: the attraction of the hearer's attention by evoking everyday experiences; the reversal of expectation built up within the listener as the story unfolds; the

shattering of one's world and its human-made securities in order to make new insights possible; stimulation of the hearer or reader to thought and to participation in the parable itself, that is, we become the characters Jesus portrays in the parable; the presentation of new understandings of human existence and relationship, and; the calling to a decision as to whether or not we accept Jesus' parabolic claims as being valid and therefore applicable to our lives. A study of five parables then followed: the Pharisee and the Tax Collector; the Good Samaritan; the Workers in the Vineyard; the Unmerciful Servant; and the Prodigal Son. Finally, a New Testament parabolic definition of relationship was drawn out from the parables studied.

Chapter 3 set forth a theology of marriage which attempts to allow a "traditional" understanding to be informed and complemented by some contemporary thinking. Then the implications for marriage of the parabolic understanding of human existence and relationship were examined, and the question asked, "How can couples work toward a fuller achievement of this understanding in their marriage?" with the answer being found in a workshop approach to premarital and newly-wed training which uses that parabolic definition as a foundation, and explores some of the more important relational dynamics of marriage.

The fourth chapter is the development of a workshop design for helping engaged and newly-wed couples begin to provide avenues for working toward achievement of the biblical-parabolic definition of relationship. The validation of the workshop approach, workshop goals, and some suggestions for conducting the workshop were set forth. The major portion of this chapter is the design for a five session workshop

dealing with self-knowledge, communication, trust, sexuality, and the spiritual dimensions of marriage. Also included in the first session is an introduction to the parabolic understanding of human existence and relationship.

Chapter 5 is a reporting on a "testing" of the design, which was done by conducting the workshop with engaged and newly-wed couples, to see how well the design worked under the actual conditions it was set up to deal with and the purposes toward which it would hopefully work. A brief description of the workshop conditions, participants, leadership, and procedure opened the chapter, with a summary of evaluations by both participants and the leader, refinements in the design, and personal learnings for this writer concluding the chapter.

Conclusions and Personal Reflections.

As a result of this experience it is my conclusion that a workshop approach to premarital and newly-wed training is a valid approach to an important ministry of the Church, a methodology that should be given serious consideration by every pastor. The extent to which the areas or dynamics of the married relationship can be explored in such a workshop setting go far beyond what I have been able to accomplish (and, based on conversations with clergy colleagues, far beyond what most indicate they do in premarital counseling) in working with engaged couples in the past. My experience has been, even with my particular interest in and concern about premarital preparation, that I have not been able to explore with couples on a one-to-one (one pastor, one couple) basis the various relational dynamics in the depth provided

by the workshop. This has been due in part to limitations of time: I have found it very difficult to schedule more than three ninety minute sessions with couples planning to be married. If I had had three such sessions with the two couples who participated in the entire workshop it would have involved a total of nine hours of my time, but only four-and-one-half hours covering the content of the counseling, since it would have to be duplicated for each couple. The time we spent together in the workshop was eleven-and-one-half hours, but what we were able to do in that time was far, far greater than would have been possible in two one-to-one situations, and it only involved two-and-one-half hours more. The extra time was much more than worth it, and had the third couple who missed the Saturday segments because of illness been able to finish the workshop, the time in the workshop would have totaled less than three one-to-one situations, and still far more would have been accomplished.

Another consideration in my judgement of the effectiveness and desirability of the workshop approach is that many of the techniques used there are not possible in one-to-one premarital and/or newly-wed training, such as the trust circles, or the rental of a film. The workshop makes available a wide variety of techniques that may be inappropriate, ineffective, or just impossible when counseling with only one couple at a time, but which have been proven to be effective in many settings.

A final justification for the workshop approach is another suggestion found in Chapter 1, the sharing and stimulation that took place between couples. The input to the couples on the various dynamics came not only from me, but also from each other as they discussed and/or

debriefed what they experienced throughout the workshop. I believe this was an invaluable asset that one-to-one counseling would not and could not have provided.

In summary, then, the major reasons put forth in the introduction to this paper for utilizing a workshop approach to premarital and/or newly wed training have, in my judgement, been validated by the experience of conducting the design and reflecting upon that experience — better, more effective and efficient use of a pastor's time for premarital preparation; a chance to explore the dynamics of marriage at much greater depth; and the greater, broader sharing and input afforded by the group process. It is with these feelings and conclusions that the workshop designed in this paper is proposed and offered as a useful tool in the pastoral ministry of the Church.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

PUBLICITY

Newsletter or Bulletin Announcement for the Workshop.

"Getting a Head Start on Marriage"

Marriage is what you make of it! A good marriage is the result of two loving persons who are willing to work -- and play -- at it to keep it growing. The church is committed to helping couples prepare for fulfilling, happy marriages.

"Exploring Marriage," a five part program is available to couples planning to marry within the next year, and to couples who have been married for less than two years. Led by _____, it will begin on _____. The group will deal with five important areas of marriage, helping couples discover the strengths in their relationship, and using them to build a mutually satisfying marriage. All couples planning to be married in our church are required to attend all five sessions unless unusual circumstances prohibit. Also, couples married for less than two years are cordially invited to participate.

Since the group is limited to eight couples, it is best to sign up as early as possible. You may do this, or obtain further information by contacting (leader) at _____.

Brochure for the Workshop.

"Getting a Head Start on Marriage"

Marriage is what you make of it! The loving skill of two persons willing to work -- and play -- at it are basic to a happy marriage in which husband and wife grow together. As you think about your marriage, you undoubtedly want it to be a fulfilling, happy relationship. The church and I, as pastor, stand behind you in this desire.

To help you work toward the realization of your hopes for your marriage, a five part program, "Exploring Marriage," is made available three times a year in our church. Designed for engaged couples who plan to be married within the next year, and for couples who have been married less than two years, this experience is both enjoyable and informative. Its goal is to help you discover the strengths in your relationship and use them to build a mutually satisfying marriage. This is done through the exploration of areas such as communication, trust, and sexuality. All couples planning to be married in this church are expected to participate in all five sessions unless unusual circumstances make this impossible. The dates for the next "Exploring Marriage" group are _____. Since the group is limited to eight couples it will be good to sign up as early as possible.

In addition to the workshop, I ask couples to meet with me once before the first meeting to get better acquainted, discuss any concerns you may have, and -- for engaged couples -- plan how your wedding can be a most memorable and meaningful time. Please contact me at _____ to set up a time for this informal conversation.

To prepare for the "Exploring Marriage" program it will be helpful for you to do some reading on building a good marriage. Every couple is asked to read at least one, preferably two books from the following list, prior to the first session of the program:

The Future of Marriage by Jessie Bernard (New York: World Publishing Company, 1972, paperback).

The Intimate Marriage by Howard and Charlotte Clinebell (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

How to Have a Happy Marriage by David and Vera Mace (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977).

Equal Marriage by Jean Stapleton and Richard Bright (New York: Harper and Roy, 1976, paperback).

If you wish you may borrow these books from me or the church library.

As you think about your busy schedule, this may seem like a lot to ask of you. It will take time and effort, but I'm sure that afterwards you'll feel it was time and effort well invested in your future happiness. I'm looking forward to this time with you. Please contact me if you have any questions.

In love and peace,

APPENDIX B

OUTLINE FOR "GET ACQUAINTED" SESSION

A get acquainted session should be held with every couple prior to the workshop. Its purpose is to establish some rapport between the pastor and couple, discuss any concerns they may have, and with engaged couples plan how the wedding may be a meaningful experience.

I. Getting acquainted.

A. Introductions, social amenities.

B. Their background.

1. As a couple

- a. How did they meet?
- b. First impressions of each other.
- c. How long have they been serious about each other?
- d. How long since proposal and engagement announcement?

2. As individuals.

a. Family background.

- 1). Parents -- what kind of relationship with them?
- 2). Siblings -- how many, where on the "peck list" are they, and what kind of relationship with them?

b. Education.

c. Vocation.

- d. Leisure time interests (also as a couple).
- C. Pastor shares his-her background and life (it is as important for the pastor to do this with the couple as for them to share with him-her, for rapport is a two-way matter).
- II. Preparing the couple for the workshop.
 - A. Reasons for the workshop approach.
 - B. Areas to be explored.
 - C. Discussion of questions the couple may have about the workshop.
- III. Discussion of any concerns or questions the couple has regarding marriage, especially those arising from their reading.
- IV. Discussion of the couple's wedding plans and questions.
- V. Closing the session.
 - A. Confirm dates for workshop, and their commitment to participate.
 - B. Express appreciation for being asked to be a part of this significant time in their lives.

APPENDIX C

HELP US EVALUATE AND LEARN FROM THIS EVENT

(It will be of significant help if each person will take a few minutes before leaving to fill in the following evaluation form. You may sign or not as you prefer.)

General evaluation of the event (Please circle the appropriate number)

(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Excellent)

The most helpful things in this event were:

The least helpful (or unhelpful) things were:

Did this event help you achieve or work toward your goals?

If "YES," what was helpful in doing this?

If "NO" what was helpful in doing this?

As a result of this experience I now plan to:

These follow-on experiences would help me continue my growth:

Other comments, suggestions, criticisms:

Thank you for your help.
SHALOM

APPENDIX D

ANNOTATED WEDDING SERVICE

This is a sample of a way in which the wedding service and its meaning might be discussed during the final session of the workshop. It will be helpful if each couple has a printed copy of the service, although it need not be in annotated form. If couples wish to make alterations or write their own service, and either are agreeable to the pastor, this service can serve as a starting point for them to do that.

In this annotation the rubrics, or instructions to the pastor, will be marked with an asterisk (*), and the explanatory remarks for each section will be contained in parentheses.

THE WEDDING SERVICE

*After the mothers of the couple have been seated, the minister shall enter the sanctuary alone, and make the following statement.

My friends, we have come together to witness the marriage of _____ and _____. In this celebration of their love we recognize the love of God for all persons, and the blessings of life which that love brings. By thus placing God at the focal point of this service, along with _____ and _____, we have come to a time of worship, and it is to this central act of the Christian faith and life that I call each of you.

Let us worship through the celebration of marriage!

(This opening statement is a reminder that all love is born in God's love for us, and because of that a wedding, which is a result of

love between two persons, is a time of worship, a time of celebrating God's love in our lives.)

*Then the processional music shall begin, and the wedding parties enter. When all are in their places, the minister shall say,

We are here in the presence of God and these witnesses to join _____ and _____ in marriage. We believe this relationship between a man and a woman is to be held in honor by all persons, because it was established by God as a part of the act of Creation, and because it was blessed by our Lord Jesus, the Christ, by his presence at the wedding feast in Cana, in Galilee. The Christ has taught us that it was God's plan for a man to leave his father and mother and be joined to a wife. Through his apostles we have been taught that it is a relationship of mutual respect and love, with husband and wife bearing each other's weaknesses, comforting one another in sickness, trouble, and sorrow, and providing for each other, as God commands. It is into this most intimate of all human relationships that _____ and _____ now come.

(The theological statement is a concise but comprehensive definition of marriage from the Christian perspective. It speaks of the biblical foundations for marriage, both Old and New Testamental. The statement also points the way toward seeing marriage as a mutual effort of husband and wife, and the kinds of things — forbearance, comfort, love — which couples must practice to have a good marriage.)

*Addressing the persons to be married, the minister shall say,
 _____ and _____, God in love has called you together to be joined in marriage. I charge you both, as you stand in God's presence, that having given due consideration to this relationship, you

should now give your promises of marriage to each other. You may be sure that if you faithfully honor them, as God demands of us, your marriage will be a happy one, you will find fulfillment in it, and your home will be a place of love and peace.

(This section reminds the couple of the importance of God's love in our lives. It also reminds them that the marriage vows are of a sacred nature, and it is in the keeping of them that happiness in marriage is born.)

*The minister shall then ask the man,

_____, will you take _____ to be your wife, and will you give her your pledge, in all honor and love, all faith and tenderness, to live with her and cherish her, according to God's will, in the bond of marriage?

*The man shall answer,

I WILL.

*Then the minister shall ask the woman,

_____, will you take _____ to be your husband, and will you give him your pledge, in all honor and love, all faith and tenderness, to live with him and cherish him, according to God's will, in the bond of marriage?

*The woman shall answer,

I WILL.

(These questions are a public affirmation of the couple's intentions regarding marriage: the taking of each other as a spouse; and the conditions under which they will live together as expressed in the relationship of honor, love, faith, and tenderness. They are also the

first of three places where the word "pledge" is used, introducing the concept of solemn promise and/or contracting into the understanding of marriage.)

*Then the minister shall ask,

Who gives _____ and _____ to each other in marriage?

*The parents of the couple, or other family members, shall answer,

WE DO.

(The concept of a bride being given in marriage by her father, or by both parents, is a sexist residue from "days of yore" when children were little more than chattel property of their parents. Where this section of the wedding ceremony is to be retained, at the request of the couple, it is recommended that this alternate form of "giving in marriage" be used, seen as 'an expression of both families' affirmation of the marriage. Should the wedding couple insist on the traditional "giving" of the bride only, their wish should be honored. However, I suggest that this whole matter be carefully explored with every couple, with sensitivity to the position and feelings of all persons involved.)

*Then the couple shall join right hands together, and the man shall say after the minister,

_____, I take you for my wife, to have and to hold from this day on, in good and bad, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, as long as we both shall live, according to God's will, and to these things I faithfully pledge myself.

*Then the woman shall say after the minister,

_____, I take you for my husband, to have and to hold from

this day on, in good and bad, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, as long as we both shall live, according to God's will, and to these things I faithfully pledge myself.

(The marriage promises are an expression of the couple's intention to stay together through all times and events, working with each other to maintain their relationship of marriage. It is only as they contract with one another to do this that they can have the best chance to make their marriage a successful, mutually satisfying experience.)

*The minister shall then receive the rings and make the following statement.

The wedding rings given by _____ and _____ are more than a visible sign of their marriage. They are a true gift of their love for each other. The rings, circular in shape, become symbols of the never-ending circle of love that binds _____ and _____ to each other, and thus they are also to them and to us all symbols of their vows in which they have given themselves to each other.

(The statement about the rings seeks to make them more than a formality or cherished tradition, but to see them as symbols of the giving of self that marriage must be.)

*As the rings are placed on the hands, each of the couple shall say, in his or her turn,

I GIVE YOU THIS RING AS A PLEDGE OF ENDURING FAITH AND UNDYING LOVE.

(The promise of the rings is a further solidifying of what the couple has already promised each other.)

*Then the couple shall join right hands, and the minister, taking them in his-her right hand, shall say,

_____ and _____, you are now husband and wife according to the witness of the Church and the law of the State. Become one. Fulfill your promises. Love and serve the Lord.

(The proclamation of marriage recognizes that it is both a spiritual and legal relationship, and enjoins the couple to live up to what they have promised in the ceremony.)

*Then the couple shall kneel, and the minister pray:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, without your grace no promise can be certain. Strengthen _____ and _____, then, with the gift of your Holy Spirit, that they may fulfill the promises they have made to each other. Keep them faithful in their new relationship and to you. Fill them with such love and joy that they may build a home where there is no stranger. Guide them by your Word, so that they may serve you all their lives. Through Jesus the Christ our Lord. Amen.

(This prayer not only recognizes our dependence upon God for the fulfillment of God's will for us, but further adds to the nature of the marriage relationship the understanding of service to others.)

*Then, with the couple still kneeling, the minister shall ask the congregation to join them in the Lord's Prayer.

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME. THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD. AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US

FROM EVIL. FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY
FOREVER. AMEN.

(Worship is a participatory act; the congregation is not simply the observer of a drama that takes place before it. In recognition of the wedding service as an act of worship, the Lord's Prayer should be said by all present.)

*Then the minister shall add this blessing:

Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before the presence of Glory without blemish and with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jessus, the Christ, be glory and majesty, dominion and authority, before all time, and now, and forever. Amen.

APPENDIX E

DESCRIBE YOURSELF

Please give each of the following characteristics a number value based on how often each is true of you. The scale is from 1 to 7 as follows:

- 1 Never or almost never true
- 2 Usually not true
- 3 Sometimes but infrequently true
- 4 Occasionally true
- 5 Often true
- 6 Usually true
- 7 Always or almost always true

Self reliant _____

Flatterable _____

Yielding _____

Happy _____

Helpful _____

Strong Personality _____

Defends own beliefs _____

Loyal _____

Cheerful _____

Unpredictable _____

Moody _____

Forceful _____

Independent _____

Feminine _____

Shy _____

Reliable _____

Conscientious _____

Analytical _____

Athletic _____

Sympathetic _____

Affectionate _____

Jealous _____

Theatrical _____

Has leadership abilities _____

Assertive _____

Sensitive to needs of others _____

Truthful _____	Tender _____
Willing to take risks _____	Friendly _____
Understanding _____	Aggressive _____
Secretive _____	Gullible _____
Makes decisions easily _____	Inefficient _____
Compassionate _____	Acts as a leader _____
Sincere _____	Childlike _____
Self-sufficient _____	Adaptable _____
Eager to soothe hurt feelings _____	Individualistic _____
Conceited _____	Does not use harsh language _____
Dominant _____	Unsystematic _____
Soft-spoken _____	Competitive _____
Likable _____	Loves children _____
Masculine _____	Tactful _____
Warm _____	Ambitious _____
Solemn _____	Gentle _____
Willing to take a stand _____	Conventional _____

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